Pulpit Preaching

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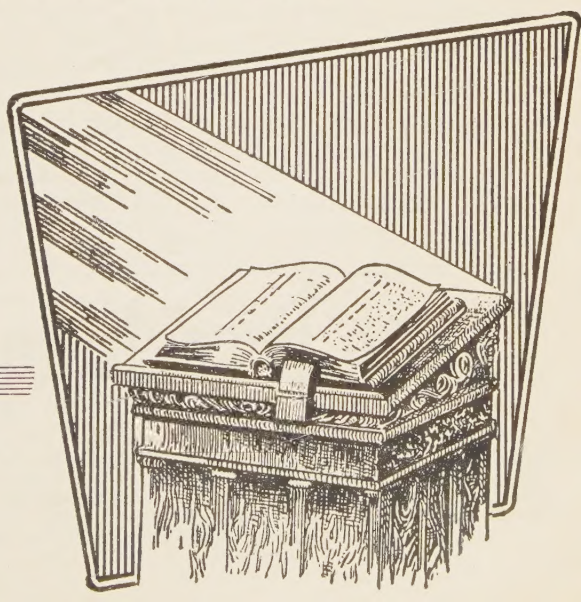

A PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL FOR MINISTERS

Editorial Comments

"The Presence of God," the first of this month's emphases, reveals highways of understanding toward the closer walk with God. The second theme, "Four Varieties of Religious Experience," includes four sermons by Theodore P. Ferris, gifted and distinguished pastor of Boston's famous Trinity Church.

Next month's themes will be on "The Christ I Offer You," sermons on discipleship, and "Sermons from the Seashore," a group of summer messages by Lowell M. Atkinson, pastor of the First Methodist Church, Englewood, New Jersey.

—o—

Books For Pulpit Preaching

Principles and Practice of Preaching, Ilion T. Jones, (Abingdon, 272 pp., $3.75)

The Minister Behind the Scenes, George Hedley (Macmillan, 147 pp., $2.50)

Preaching on the Books of the New Testament, Dwight E. Stevenson (Harper, 268 pp., $3.95)

Reading the Bible, E. H. Rece & William A. Beardslee (Prentice-Hall, 188 pp.)

Helping the Bible Speak, Johnnye Akin, **et al** (Association, 117 pp., $2.50)

The Prophets — Pioneers to Christianity, Walter G. Williams (Abingdon, 223 pp., $3.50)

Christ and His Church, Anders Nygren (Westminster, 125 pp., $2.50)

The Church in Southeast Asia, Rajah B. Manikam & Winburn T. Thomas (Friendship, 171 pp., $2.50)

St. Francis of Assisi, Leonard von Matt & Walter Hauser, (Regnery, $6.50)

* * * *

Principles and Practice of Preaching is a study of sermon construction and concerns the background of preaching; preparing and delivering the sermon; and advance planning. In a clear and illuminating examination of the preacher's work, this volume offers practical suggestions and much inspiration. It is a suitable text for the classroom and a worthy guide for the experienced pastor . . . *The Minister Behind the Scenes*

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Worth Quoting

"Christians only, but not only Christians, is a slogan of some Protestant bodies. It i a noble ideal. Consider the first phras "Christians only." It sets a high goal o pure Christian loyalty seldom attained o land or sea. For some of us a more descrip tive label would be "Christians also." T our pagan loyalties we add Christ. He i one among many.

In Japan recently an American mis sionary, after telling me that less than percent of the Japanese people are Christ ians, went onto say, "We have no doubt tha millions of them would become Christians i they could do so without giving up Shint and Buddhism." The Nipponese are willin to become "Christians also" but not "Christ ians only." While the deities of Shinto an Buddhism are not in our Western pantheon we have other gods aplenty to take thei places. We are about as reluctant as th Japanese to let "Christ be all and in all," a Paul instructed in his letter of Colossae (Co 3:11). It is this modern problem which wa also the Colossian problem.

Dwight E. Stevenson in *Preachin on the Books of the New Testamen* (Harper)

* * * *

It was said in the days of John Chryso stom, "Better that Constantinople cease t be than John Chrysostom should cease t preach." Few preachers in our country ar as influential in the life of a large city a was John Chrysostom. But if all the preach ers were taken out of our cities, large an small, it would be fatal for the mental an spiritual health of each city and of the coun try as a whole. The sermon is the most in portant single redemptive force of the wee in every community where there are Chris ian churches.

Ilion T. Jones in *Principles an Practice of Preaching* (Abingdon

* * * *

The human heart is like a photograph

Continued on Page 17

Pulpit Preaching

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RALPH W. SOCKMAN
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J. CALVERT CARISS
DONALD SIMMS, JR.
E. L. ALLEN
HAROLD A. BOSLEY

t Home With God

RALPH W. SOCKMAN, Christ Church, New York, N. Y.

Let us be honest with ourselves and ask, w near and personal does God seem to us this moment?

That there is a God veiled in the mystery things few, if any of us, would deny. We not explain the physical creation of the iverse without a First Cause. Some Power re must be which started the stars spin- g through space and holds them in their rses. Some great Organizer must have anged the seasons and ordered the speed light and sound. As the Psalmist said, he heavens are telling the glory of God d the firmament proclaims his handi- rk."

But when I ponder the greatness of the eator with a universe on his hands, I feel e the Psalmist, as he said, "When I look at heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the on and the stars which Thou hast estab- ned, what is man that Thou art mindful him?" God seems so immeasurably great d man so infintesimally small. And if we d been caught in the recent floods and be- d homes and loved ones swept away, ght we not be tempted to conclude that universe is too vast and unfeeling to be ncerned with individual persons? It is tty hard to feel close to God if we think Him only as Creator.

Of course, we can cultivate the love of na- e until we begin to feel that the winds d the woods are alive with a power that is rsonal. The poet Wordsworth came to h a conviction. He said:

I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime,
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

Recently I was talking with a man lying ill in a New York hotel. He was about to leave for his home in Santa Fe. His eyes lighted up as he told me of the view from the window of his home in the west. He was sure that lovely vista of mountains would speed the cure of his body.

PERSONALITY OF GOD

We can advance, you see, from a sense of God as impersonal Creative Power to an awareness of God as a Personality revealing himself through nature. Yet even this second step hardly makes God near enough for intimate personal communion. If all that we could know of God came through nature, we could scarcely find saving help in him. Suppose you were the only person on an isolated island, and pain came to your body or sorrow to your mind. Could you find adequate comfort from a lovely sunset or the graceful sweep of a shoreline?

Some years ago in a time of deep sorrow, we visited the lovely old city of Charleston, South Carolina. We did find there a measure of comfort. The restless yet faithful tides of the sea suggested the eternal amid the changing. The beautiful magnolia gardens reminded us of life rising out of death. But our comfort came from the double revelation of God through nature and human nature. The beauty in the heart of man which helped him to work with God in creating those gardens, and the sense of the eternal which had inspired men to build those worshipful churches — all these served to lift the clouds of our sorrow and reveal horizons beyond the reach of death.

Yes, if we are to have vital personal communion with God, we must advance beyond communing with Him through nature to contact with Him through persons.

Turn to the Bible. It opens with the story of creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Then keep on turning the pages of the Old Testament and

watch how the progressive understanding of the writers interprets God as drawing nearer and nearer and nearer. The prophet Isaiah pictures the great God as "measuring the waters in the hollow of his hand" and holding the nations "like a drop from a bucket." And then in the same chapter Isaiah says "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms." In their concept, you see, the mighty Creator is coming closer and ever closer.

And then came Jesus of Nazareth. The stories of his nativity made men feel that the Almighty God had stooped to our weakness and became incarnate in a babe born in a manger in a peasant land. The child grew, tempted in all points even as we are, and yet without sin. His matchless purity and power became the lasting miracle of the ages. He manifested such wisdom in his words and such power in his works that multitudes became convinced that he came from God.

GOD AS FATHER

Jesus was ever talking to God as his Father. He would stop beside the road or withdraw to a quiet place and talk with God. When he came forth from his prayers, he showed such freshness of strength and poise of mind that his disciples asked him to teach them to pray.

And Jesus taught his followers a model prayer, beginning, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Thus Jesus would have his followers begin their prayers by looking up to the greatness of God. There he brings God close enough to "give us our daily bread" and "forgive us our trespasses" and "deliver us from evil."

Jesus revealed God as great enough to be adored and yet near enough to enter into personal communion with the lowiest.

Jesus epitomized the personal relationship of the individual to God in a matchless story which we call the parable of the Prodigal Son. You know it. A wayward boy called for his share of his father's estate and went away to squander it in riotous loose living. After he had given rein to his desires, taking what he wanted when he wanted it in his selfish sensual living, he discovered that he no longer wanted what he took . . . He became fed up with the husks of living. He became homesick for his father's house. And he said, "I will arise and go to my father."

This is the simple text of our message. And note how simple it is. Jesus would have us realize that the great God who made the heaven and the earth is as near and personal as a father to a son, that we can turn to God as directly as that boy went back to his father, that returning to God is like a home-coming, and that when we do come back to God we are at home. That is the good news which is at the heart of the Christian gospel.

Now let us follow for a moment the young fellow's words, "I will arise and go to my father." Note that he said, "I will arise and go." He did not ask his father to come and make him comfortable in his self-centered indulgent living. If we are to have vital relationship with God, we must try to rise toward his greatness and not try to reduce him to our littleness.

GREATNESS OF GOD

One trouble with some of our thinking today is that in our effort to bring our religion down to earth, we forget the greatness of God.

Last summer I revisited some of the world's great cathedrals. I was at Salisbury and Winchester and Canterbury in England, Notre Dame in Paris, St. Marks in Venice, the Duomo in Florence. I stood in awe not only at their beauty but at the love which inspired such structures. Who puts it into the heart of men to spend such infinite pains in lifting lofty spires and making immortal glass for the glory of God? If you do not beleive in God, how can you explain the fact that religion has inspired the noblest music and the finest art. My summer contacts with cathedrals and mountains help me to understand why Christians eventually added to the prayer which Our Lord taught us the closing words of exaltation, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever." And I came back with an increased desire to proclaim the greatness of God.

American churches need to recover and recultivate the element of *adoration.* We must take time to ponder God in His greatness and beauty and love. We in America and Canada have more active parish programs than have the churches of Europe. Our Sunday morning services are better attended than are those of the Old World. But in the cathedrals I visited overseas, I found people in prayer at all hours of the week days I shall be more hopeful of a real revival of religion in America when I see people pausing on week days as well as on Sundays to kneel in the churches, waiting before God in meditation and prayer. And for

t purpose our churches should be kept
en not only on the avenues of our crowded
es but on the Main Streets of our towns
l villages, kept open through the week.
We often call our churches meeting houses.
ily they were the centers to which the
neer settlers came to find fellowship in
days of the lonely frontier. And they
still the social centers where many of
finest friendships and many of our last-
romances are started. But remember—
church is a meeting house with God and
merely with men.
The trouble with too many of us is that
are trying to get God to work for us
hout taking the time really to worship
m. Our Lord's Prayer teaches us to hal-
the name of Our Father in heaven be-
e we ask Him to give us our daliy bread.
must not ask God to be our servant with-
recognizing Him as our sovereign. The
rd will answer our prayers only as we
y Him.
Therefore, if we would feel close to God,
us, like the prodigal son in the parable,
, "I will arise and go to my father and I
l say to him, Father I have sinned
inst heaven and before you; I am
longer worthy to be called your son;
at me as one of your hired servants."

NEARNESS OF GOD

And now go on. When we do turn to God
willingness to serve and obey Him, then
discover what the prodigal boy found,
nely that the father is coming toward us.
e record of the gospel story is that "while
was yet at a distance, his father saw him
l had compassion and ran and embraced
n."
When we repent of our sins, humble our
rits, and surrender our wills to serve
l, we do feel him drawing near to us.
at is the testimony of multitudes who
e tried it. I cannot prove it to you by any argument. It has to be discovered by experience.

And it is this feeling of nearness to God that we crave. On a Sunday after my morning service in New York, I flew to St. Louis to help dedicate the Crawford Memorial chapel in the Grace Methodist Church of that city. It was one of the most glorious days I have ever seen. As we soared along some three miles above the earth we could see through clear air the contour of the land below us. Certainly if ever nature spoke of God, it was speaking that day. The heavens were declaring His glory. Why then did we need to dedicate any chapel in which to worship God? Why? Because we need to feel the nearness of God as well as his greatness. And we feel His nearness when we kneel before altars which symbolize His sacrifices for us, and when we touch shoulders with fellow worshipers.

Do not most of us feel closer to God in some places than in others? Maybe it is a room in the home where we were wont to have family prayers. Maybe it is the church in which we were married. Perhaps it is the grave of a loved one. Some years ago an elderly man was taking a company of friends for a drive through his old home neighborhood. At one point he asked his chauffeur to stop and he excused himself. After a few minutes we looked back and we saw him standing with bared head before the grave of his mother.

I wonder if there is not some person right now who like the Prodigal Son feels homesick for his Heavenly Father and longing for the good and pure things he may once have enjoyed? Perhaps there is someone who recalls how much nearer God seemed in his youth than he does now. Then like the Prodigal Son who had drifted into a far country let us say, "I will arise and go to my father."

an You Hear God?

CONRAD G. CROW, Highland Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Ky.

The more I have considered my message
more I have felt that the question poised
the title "Can You Hear God?" should
bear at the conclusion of this sermon
her than at its beginning. For certainly
purpose of my being here is to speak on
d's behalf. As a man I address you with
rds that will, I trust, reach your ears. As
inister I address you believing that God
l speak through me words that can change your life. The minister, unless he is able to point the way to God, becomes a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. He is worse than ineffective; he is dangerous. For the danger then exists of distorting the word of truth and leading the people astray. On the other hand, those who hear the minister should weigh his words with anticipation, extracting from them all the spiritual vitality which their understanding will permit.

If they are not willing to do this the word of God becomes so many sound waves of truth impinging upon deaf ears. If, therefore, at the conclusion of this sermon your answer to the question "Can You Hear God?" is "No," blame me for having failed to translate his message aright, or blame yourself for having failed to listen, but do not blame God for having failed to speak.

That God speaks and reveals himself to man is one of the basic beliefs of Christianity. It has rightly been called the basis of Christian Doctrine, for unless God had chosen to reveal himself He would have remained ever a mystery. No doubt we would have been able by observing the beauty, orderliness, and abundance of physical nature to deduce that something beyond man was responsible for it all. Indeed the psalmist bears witness to the fact that God can be seen in nature when he writes: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge." But however lovely the rose may be, however awesome the stars, however beautiful the autumn leaves, they do not tell us whether the God who made them is concerned about man, if He is present in this world, if we shall ever see him. In a word, the only way we can know the kind of God we worship is for that God to show us who He is. Therefore, we want to look at the ways in which God revealed himself to his people before Christ and how, when the time was fulfilled, God came himself that we may know him.

GOD SPEAKING

Time and again in the Old Testament, God is pictured as speaking to his people: with Adam in the garden of Eden, with Moses through the burning bush, with Samuel as he prepared to anoint Saul king over Israel. The high point of such speaking in the Old Testament, however, comes with the prophets. They are in no way distinguished from an ordinary man. What is peculiar about the prophet is not his person, nor what he is, but what he has—the Word of God. In the earlier times of God's speaking to man the concept of God was incomplete and in some respects crude. This is borne out in the view of God which is held in various parts of the Old Testament. During the Mosaic period and when Israel was struggling to become a nation in the midst of rival nations, God was considered primarily as one who helped his people win the victory in warfare. This is illustrated by the early narrative of Joshua's vsiion before the battle of Jericho. When Joshua was by Jericho, a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand; and Joshua said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."

As time went on and the Israelites conquered the land, God came to be associated with other realms of national life and ceased to be primarily a God of battle. However, God of Israel was still believed to belong only to Israel as that peoples' exclusive possession. The existence of other gods was admitted for other nations. But not until we come to the later chapters of Isaiah, written during the 6th century B. C. at the time of the Jewish Exile, does the clear assertion come that there are no other gods at all. Again and again in the 45th chapter of Isaiah occur words such as: "I am the Lord and there is no other, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none besides me." Not only was God pictured as the only God, but his dominion was over all the world. "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."

GOD SENT HIS SON

The prophets revealed God in a way that had not been done before them. But imbedded in their message was the hope for one who was to come from God. He would rule the people and save them from their sins. His name would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace. Thus it was that when the time was fulfilled God sent forth his Son who filled the prophecy of the Old Testament prophets full of meaning and life. Words about God took a back seat, for here was God become flesh, assuming the only form that would enable men to understand exactly who he was. Two small boys were intently watching the activity in an ant hill. All was hustle and bustle as the line of ants in orderly but urgent procession made the long treck from their hill around a large rock to a discarded candy wrapper on the other side. After observing the circuitous route for some moments one of the boys quietly asked, "How do you suppose someone could tell those ants that they could go over that rock and get that candy paper?" After a moments reflection the other as quietly answered, "Well, I guess he'd have to change into an ant." And how do you suppose God can tell us that life is more than appears to the eye, that He loves us and is always ready to forgive us when we turn to him. "Well, I guess he'd have

become a man." "And the word became sh and dwelt among us." Fantastic? Incredible? Yes, but true.

So it was that God came into life. Born as are born, being tempted even as we are, ffering and dying he took his sojourn in man flesh, and now "sitteth on the right nd of God the Father Almighty." But we eet him as we pray, as we invite him into r homes, as we meet for worship in our urches. He confronts us in the pages of e Bible and his spirit is ever present. In uncertain terms God continues to show mself to man. But how much has man seen God? Of course, we can never understand m fully for then He would no longer be od or we would be his equal. But He can understood and seen more fully than any us have seen him thus far. There is not e of us who has exhausted God of what has to reveal of himself.

CONCEPTS OF GOD

Each of us has his own concept and ideas God. Some, no doubt, are much farther adnced than others. Some, no doubt, are zy attempts to collect the characteristics God which Jesus described and form them o some semblance of order: God is love, od is forgiving, God is Father, God is Spirit d so on. The result is often misleading and nfusing. Several years ago interviews were id with seventy-five Protestant children ght years of age or younger living in New rk City. They were designed to learn what e children thought of God. Some of the swers were: "God is a very good man," od is a powerful doctor," "God is a Spirit d can get into places without being seen" d "God is a king, the greatest king of all." r an eight year old I would say that these e pretty good answers. But they will not for an eighteen year old. If we are to be ture in Christ our spiritual growth must ep pace with our physical and mental owth. But many Christians are high-chair ristians when it comes to spiritual food. long as we remain babes in Christ God not able to say to us everything He has to . Babes in Christ can never bring in the ngdom of God.

But by what right do we call anyone a babe in Christ? By what standard can we measure the growth of ourselves and others in Christ? It is by the evidence of the life we live each day. In our work, our family, our church and community relations we reveal our spiritual age each day. And their is evidence everywhere that we all have room to grow. How then does such growth take place? Let us go back a moment. We said that God encounters us as a person in Jesus Christ, now revealed through the Holy Spirit. Such a personal encounter calls for a response from us, some acknowledgment that we recognize who is speaking. Such a response is called faith. It is more than verbal assent to the truth that God has gone all the way for our salvation in the gift of his only son to the world. It must be the human compliment of this divine gift, namely, the total and unreserved commitment and surrender to God of every area of life. And this is where the glory of God's revelation through Christ breaks forth. For He encounters every one of us with the same decision, "Will you be mine or will you withhold from me a part of your life?" The contemporary theologian, Emil Brunner, has written, "To believe means to be dependent, but also to be dragged out of all self-securities, and to have my only security in God. Where man does not believe he has his security in himself, in his reason, in his science, in his world. The man who does not believe stands on his own two feet. The man who does believe hangs in the hand of God, above the abyss of perdition."

Having said this let me add that seldom is such a total act of commitment accomplished overnight or even in a life time. But there can be that striving toward the perfect which will bear its fruit in all areas of our life. It may begin in homes where differences exist that cannot be seemingly resolved, or in businesses where practices and methods are pursued against which our spirits rebel, or in the church which needs the help and cooperation of all its members.

"Can you hear God?" "He has spoken to us through a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

od in the Shadows

J. CALVERT CARISS, St. Stephen's Congregational Church, Jamaica, B. W. I.

The shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1.

No day comes and goes without shadows. artist would paint a picture without hing in some shadows. Shadows lend beauty to the commonplace, add mystery and romance to a scene which without them would be unattractive. Shadows are the stuff

that poetry is made of.

Everyone knows the majestic words with which Psalm 91 begins,

> "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Not so well-known, perhaps, but equally lovely is the promise of the succour and protection which the Messiah will give to those who trust in Him, as it is given through Isaiah:

> "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

"The shadow of the Almighty" and "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." What beautiful pictures of our compassionate Lord those words afford. To be shadowed by the omnipotent God is surely to be safe from every evil thing.

SHADOWED BY GOD

You have seen a child playing, running here and there, enjoying himself, quite unconscious until he stumbles and falls, and finds himself in his mother's tender arms, that she is shadowing him all the while. Whatever happens we are under His shadow. His love surrounds us, His eye is upon us. We cannot escape from Him. To those who love Him there could be no more comforting thought, but to those who turn away from him, here is a solemn warning: Go where he will, the unrepentant sinner is shadowed. God sees Him, marks his actions, knows his thoughts. Some years ago, a thief creeping stealthily out of a garage with his pockets full of money from the till, was challenged by a policeman. In desperation, he drew a gun, shot the policeman dead, and made his escape before any alarm could be sounded. Within a few hours, the man's identity was known, but the police searched in vain for sufficient evidence to convict him. For years, detectives shadowed that man, and then one day a careless word to an aquaintance, overheard by a police officer, led to his arrest. He was tried and condemned to death. Probably he was quite unconscious that he was being shadowed during those years between the crime and his arrest. Satan sees to it that many a sinner does not realize that he is being shadowed—shadowed by the eternal God.

The picture created in the mind by those words, "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," is that of a place of refuge from the burning mid-day sun, and the merciless wind. From the heat of life's battle and from the fury of its tempests, every humble believer in the Lord Jesus Christ may enjoy continual refuge. Christ's promise is not of peaceful surroundings but of peace of mind, when all around is like a stormy sea. "My peace," He said, "I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

SHADOW OF DEATH

If shadows can be protective, they can be chilling too. The Psalmist speaks of the "valley of the shadow of death." Sooner or later, unless we are spared till Christ returns, we shall all have to pass through that valley. Perhaps we have already glimpsed it through sickness or in the passing of a loved-one. It it a formidable journey that we have to undertake, but we need not be afraid. His presence will be with us in the shadow. As a child, the short winter days found me coming home from school in the twilight. The road skirted some disused stone quarries, and I was desperately afraid sometimes when the noise of a falling stone broke the silence, or my footsteps brought an owl from its nest with an erie cry. One evening I was so frightened that when I got half way along the road, I ran back to school. The teacher, a kindly old soul, tried to comfort me. "I'll send a message to your home," she said. "Perhaps someone will come for you." Someone did come for me, my father, who thinking perhaps of his own childhood fears, did not scold me, but took my hand in his, and as we walked home together he deliberately disturbed the owls and flung stones across the quarries to let me see that I had no cause to be afraid. That is what the Lord Jesus does to His children. When the shadows darken their way, and when at His bidding they enter the last valley, He comes to them, and in His presence they are made to say with the Psalmist, "I will fear no evil."

Colossians mentions the keeping of holydays, new moons, and sabbaths as a "shadow of things to come." Hebrews teaches that the priestly ministrations were a "shadow of heavenly things." The figure is most apt. Shadows are unreal. They have no substance. They derive from that which has substance. Take away the substance, and you have no shadow left. All that a shadow can do is to witness to the existence of the reality. The Levitical ceremonials were never meant to be final. They were meant only to bear witness to God's readiness to deal with men in mercy. They pointed to something beyond

emselves. They were the shadow. Christ is e reality.

We can go even further than this. We tend think of the facts of this present world as ing the things which have substance. We e wrong if we do that. The fashion of this orld passeth away. Everything we see is stined to disappear. Eternity, not this esent time, is the reality. What we see and ow today of life is only the shadow of that ality which will become actual for us when his mortal shall put on immortality."

PETER'S SHADOW

Concerning Peter in those early days of namic Christian witness which followed ntecost, we read, "They brought forth the k into the streets and laid them on beds d couches, that at the least the shadow of ter, passing by might overshadow them . . . d they were healed everyone." The shadow Peter falling over the sick brought heal- g to them. Perhaps Peter never knew of is. You cast a shadow unconsciously. In a ser sense, our shadow falling upon men d women every day must influence them. e do not know the extent of the influence ich we exert every day. A word here and gesture there and people may leave us th an impression that will last a life time. oyd George was fond of repeating a stanza ich runs,

Alas how easily things go wrong!
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long
And there follows a mist, a weeping rain
And life is never the same again.

Once, when I was a child, a missionary yed for a couple of days in my home. He d little to me, but he made an impression me which still remains. His was a manly, ust Christianity that made a boy feel that thing could equal the life that Christ of- ed. Probably that man has gone to his reward. I don't suppose he ever had any idea of what his visit had meant to me. The shadow which fell on me as he passed was wholesome, though, and heart-warming. What sort of a shadow are we casting on our neighbours? That is a question which we ought to face. Are people better because we have touched their lives, or are they sorry that they ever met us?

A shadow is created when something or someone gets between the sun and the earth. The kind of shadow is determined by the way in which the sun's rays strike that someone or something. The kind of shadow you make depends on your position in relation to the Son of God. If you are in a right relationship to Him, the shadow you cast will be a wholesome and healing one. If you are not, then it will cause a shudder where it ought to offer shelter.

IN TOUCH WITH CHRIST

Because Peter was living in constant touch with the risen Lord and enjoying the fulness of the Holy Spirit, and his shadow had a miraculous effect on those upon whom it fell. Are you and I living in constant touch with our Lord Jesus Christ? Is prayer a vital daily experience with us? Are we proving His power over temptations? Are we yielding ourselves continually to Him? Unless we are, our shadow—the unconscious influence we exert over people—will be a bane instead of a blessing.

You and I simply cannot help casting a shadow as we walk along the street. In the same way, we cannot help leaving some influence on the lives of other people, even if we only touch them for a moment in the hurly-burly of life. It is thus essential that we should live close to Christ so that the shadow we cast may remind men of His love and power.

ne Main Event

DONALD SIMMS, JR., Methodist Church, Anthony, New Mexico-Texas

He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. Matthew 10:39. *Whither shall I flee from thy presence? Psalm* 139:7. *And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Genesis* 32:24, 26.

I am sure that you have watched a boxing wrestling show on radio or television. We almsot imagine the announcer saying: nd now, ladies and gentlemen, tonight's in event for the heavy weight champion- p of the world, a fifteen round contest ween Blocky Adams and Joe Bloke. In this corner, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, wearing white trunks, weighing 204½, the sensational winner of 22 consecutive professional bouts, the outstanding contender for the heavyweight title, Joe Bloke! In this corner, from Hackensack, New Jersey, wearing purple trunks, weighing 201, who tonight de-

fends his title for the seventh time, the heavyweight champion of the world, Blocky Adams!"

It is indeed a thrilling thing, to most of us, to watch two men pit their skill, strength, stamina, and training against each other in such a contest. However, it is not as thrilling nor as vital, nor does it have the eternal consequences of the *main event* of which I wish to speak. The main event in your life *is when you choose to climb into the ring with God.*

In one sense we are in the ring with God all the time. For His spirit is continually striving with our spirit to bring about our conversion and to bring about that change in our life, that new birth, which will mean our salvation. In our quiet moments of deep thought we realize that His "still small voice" is not so still. We find in such moments that it thunders within us with the rumblings of a near earthquake.

The tourist spending the night in a small Vermont town, joined several men sitting on the porch of the general store. They were a quiet lot and after several attempts to start a conversation, he became annoyed and finally asked, "Is there a law against talking in this town?" One solitary native replied: "No law against it, but we have an understanding that no one is to speak unless he is sure he can improve on the silence." This, indeed, is the dilemma of preaching when we try to say with our stumbling words what God is already saying so well in the deep recesses of our soul.

STRUGGLE WITH GOD

This incessant struggle with God within us to "make us right" is exactly what the writer of Psalm 139 meant when he wrote: "O Lord, you know everything about me. You are acquainted with all I do. You know when I sit down and you know when I rise up and you know even my secret thoughts. You search out my path before me and even before I put a word on my tongue, you know what it will be. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend into heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in Hell thou art there. Even in the uttermost parts of the sea thy hand shall lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. Even the darkness is not dark to thee; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light with thee."

Samuel H. Miller in his book *The Life of the Soul* says that God "drives clean through every defense into the embarrassing privacy of the sensitive self. There are no secrets left. Every closet is opened, every drawer ransacked, every darkness explored." How true it is that God in so many ways seeks us out in our deeper parts, and it is here that the naked soul meets eternal God; it is here that the spirit of the creature contacts the spirit of the Creator; it is here that the little child feels the presence of the mighty Father. Thus, when we suddenly meet Him face to face we need not wonder what life is all about for His ever-present whisper says, "Life is about Me, my child, and you."

IGNORING GOD

In another sense, however, even though He is with us, around us, above and beneath us, and within us, and even though we are always "in the ring with Him," still we do not want to grapple with Him. Always we try to ignore His **"challenge to mortal combat."**

After a candidate for the Senate had spoken an admirer said to him, "I liked the straightforward way you dodged the issues." We are like that in our relationship with God, for we fear to come to grips with Him in a contest for the destiny of our eternal souls. We want to dodge the issue. We are like Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven,* who "fled him down the nights and down the days, down the labyrinthine ways" of his own mind. We seek refuge in nature, in human fellowship and in endless activity that we might escape the relentless pursuit of God.

I say again that the main event in your life is when you choose to climb into the ring with God. We fear Him and look upon Him not as a friend, but as an adversary because His demands upon us are completely terrifying. We know that God is never satisfied with a partial victory. He wants complete and total domination of our lives. He seeks a clear cut decision. God never says, "A draw is enough." He demands that we say an unequivocal "yes" while we would always answer "no." Through the voice of Elijah on Mount Carmel He says, "Will you serve God or Baal?" and through the voice of the Master He says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." We would have our association with God remain on the level of a pietistic morality while He says to us, "Love one another with the sacrificial love by which I have loved you."

TO WIN AND LOSE

To climb into the ring with God; to challenge Him with the destiny of our lives and souls means but one thing: we will lose. And yet, to lose our lives to Him and His purpose means that we will take our place with the

eat and lesser saints of the ages who one have made a worthy contribution to e building of His kingdom. One such man no lost, and yet won, was Jacob. Having bbed Esau of his birthright, he fled in fear om his brother and came at the close of e day to make his bed in a lonely place. ith a rock for his pillow he slept. There he eamed of mortal combat with God and ere he "wrestled . . . with Him until the eak of day . . . and he said, 'I will not let ee go except thou bless me.'" It was this perience of Jacob's, as testified by the ar he built to God in this lonely place nich we call Bethel, that caused him to be me the fore-runner of Jesus and one of the eat spiritual leaders of the Hebrew peo es. This was his main event.

Paul, likewise, wrestled with God as he at mpted to find justification in his own con ience for his persecution of the Christian urch. The main event in his life could ing but one answer, "Lord, what would u have me to do?"

John Wesley describes his main event in these words: "In the evening (Wednesday, May 24, 1738) I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed." After this bout with God he was no longer just a professor in the parish church school and no longer just a priest in the Church of England, but a vigorous and crusading preacher of the gospel of Christ.

It is easy for us to bring to mind such events in the lives of those great men who have led in bringing God's purposes into the life of men. But what about you? Have you been putting God off? Have you been thrusting Him aside? Have you ever entered the ring with Him for the main event? Have you ever said, "I will not let you go till you bless me?" Have you ever asked, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" Have you ever felt your heart "strangely warmed?"

aith Challenges God

E. L. ALLEN, University of Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Psalm 14:1.

The story is told of an atheist who at a ne when any open advocacy of atheism was nishable by law safeguarded himself by ening his Bible and reading the words, here is no God." Of course, he omitted e first part of the verse, for to quote that uld have been to give away his case. The dinary person, even though he makes no im to be religious, would probably still gard the denial of God as a fool's utterance. deed, it was not till the eighteenth century at atheism had any considerable following. th then and now the denial of God is sociated with revolt against the existing ttern of society. In Russia today we have nething for which history affords no pre dent. Atheism is the official creed of a eat nation. It is illegal to seek in public to rsuade men that God exists, while propa nda against Him is legal.

Of course, there is no atheism of a theoreti kind in this psalm, as there is none else ere in the Bible. The denial of God that is re suggested is a practical one: He does t care; He takes no notice; He is indiffer t to us and so we can afford to be in ferent to Him. Over against this attitude, psalmists are so sure of God that in time personal distress or national calamity, they do not tamely submit. They launch their protest in the most vehement language. Because they have met with God in conscience, conscience is not to be silenced even by what he seems to be doing. Their faith in God is so strong that they dare even to call him to account for the injustice they see about them. Theirs is no cringing obeisance to a heavenly despot, no blind acceptance of his will; the question "Why?" rings out from them again and again.

GOD QUESTIONED

When you feel injured, there are two ways in which you can react. One is to brood over the injury till you grow sullen and morose; the other is to have it out with the person who seems to have wronged you. The men of faith in the Bible take the second course with God. Read, for example, Psalm 74, and ask yourself if you would have dared to address God as this man does, using the language of expostulation, reproach, and challenge. He certainly keeps back nothing of what is in his heart. Listen to him: "How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom

and consume them." Wrong has been done, and the psalmist does not propose to acquiesce in it. Instead, he enters into the very presence of God with his complaint. "Why do you permit this?" he asks. "Why are you so inactive? Why do you not rise up to deliver us?"

The book of Job is scarcely less vehement in its language. Job's friends come to him with a whole set of formulae that will justify the ways of God to man. He dismisses them all as so much verbiage. He has been cruelly smitten in his estate, his family, and his person. Yet he is not conscious of having done anything to deserve such treatment. When he has served God so faithfully, why should he be discarded in the end? If only God would write down on a tablet the accusations he brings against him.' How readily he would take it from his hands! Yes, he would hang it about his neck and display to all the world how baseless the charges are. "Why do you torment me?" he cries to God. "Why do you not leave me alone for a while? If only I knew where I could find you, I would go there at once and demand an explanation!"

We should thank God that there are such passages as these in the Bible. Faith in God comes to better expression in them than in the neat explanations and easy assurances that would gloss over what is hard and harsh in our experience. It is in this way that we win a surer hold on God than we had before. For, like Job, we find that when we look for someone to whom we can appeal against God, there is no one to whom we can go but to God himself. In one magnificent passage he turns from God as the dark, inscrutable Power that seems intent on his destruction, and commits himself to the God whose Love he has known in his heart. He knows that his Vindicator lives and will yet maintain his cause. God will show Himself no longer to be his enemy but rather his champion. In the very act of challenging God, he finds himself clinging to God against his own doubt of Him.

APPROACHING GOD

You, perhaps, have recently passed through a bitter experience. Someone in whom you trusted has betrayed your trust. What was once the sure foundation of your life has given away beneath you and you stand at the edge of a bottomless abyss. You know what you say to yourself and to your fellows about it. Let me ask you to do more than that and to say it to God, to confront Him in protest, keeping nothing back. Do not think that you must not pray till you can bring yourself to accept what has happened. Take your complaint and your sense of injustice and build them into your prayer. Whatever you say, you will use no stronger language than has been used already by some of God's choicest servants. Listen, for example, to Jeremiah: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."

When you are dealing with some human authority, you have to be careful what you say. You must be diplomatic, because he whom you address might use his power against you. But with God you can brush all such considerations aside. Indeed, they would be quite out of place. For our inmost thoughts are known to Him already and it would be useless to attempt to conceal from Him what we really feel. If you are ever to find God again, you must find Him through your grief, through your sense of injustice, and not by pretending these are not there. He will come to you as you wrestle with Him so. So the psalmist who begins with the reproach: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" finds that before he has finished his poem has become a song of praise.

I used the word "wrestling" a moment ago. This calls to mind the strange story of Jacob wrestling in the night with an unknown but more than human adversary. "Let me go!" the other cries, but Jacob answers, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," and he emerges from the awful encounter injured but renewed. In your darkest hour close resolutely with what daunts you and threatens to reduce you to despair. Go on till you find your blessing, whatever be the price that must be paid for it. You are like a man swimming a river and halfway across caught in a powerful current. If you surrender to it, it will carry you away to your death. Battle with it, and your feet will touch bottom on the farther side before long.

THE SOUL BUILDS

In his dramatic poem *Jeremiah* Stefan Zweig describes the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and the long train of prisoners setting out on the march towards exile. They greet Jeremiah as they go forth, they question him, and he answers them. "Shall we ever see Jerusalem again?" they ask. He answers, "He who believes, looks always on Jerusalem." They ask, "Who shall rebuild the city?" He replies, "The ardour of desire the night of prison, and the suffering which brings counsel." They continue, "Will it en

re?" He answers, "Yea, stones fall, but t which the soul builds in suffering en-reth for ever."

Why is it that what the soul builds in ffering stands for ever? Because it builds n with God Himself. We must give up e for all any notion of God as throned in rnal bliss, the detached spectator of our man lot. He is not that at all. He is in-ved in it, in all our afflictions He is af-ted, and the angel of His presence saves God works from the other side of our trial to meet us in the middle of it, but He leaves it to us to break through from our side. Yes, and the God who reveals Himself in Jesus Christ is actually on both sides at once. For the shares utterly in what befalls us and at the same time comes to us with the offer to transmute our trial into his triumph. The Cross speaks of God as one who cares as we had never dreamed he would care, and the empty tomb tells of God as one who brings us to a victory for which we had not dared to hope.

hen I Am With God

HAROLD A. BOSLEY, First Methodist Church, Evanston, Illinois

Scripture: *Psalm* 19.

When a distinguished psychiatrist refer-l to us as a "neurotic age," the facts were on his side. The rapid and, as yet, un-ecked increase in ailments due to emo-nal disturbance and tension is one of the nowledged scandals of modern civiliza-n as well as one of the greatest perplexi-s of medical science. The boast frequently ard half a century ago that the increase leisure time activities and vacation pe-ds would make us a happier, healthier ple has been silenced by grim facts. We y live longer than we used to, but it is yet be proved that our longer lives are hap-r, more useful, more satisfying, more ative than the shorter ones of our fathers. are a nervous, taunt, hard-pressed, har-d, easily upset, easily irritated and easily austed generation. We have not learned v to avoid unwholesome tensions; we have learned how to manage or reduce them e we get them—or they get us. And y distort our view, our energies, and usu-paralyze thought and action with fear precisely the times when they are needed st.

Facts like these prompted the physician, xis Carrell, to observe that man simply s not have the nervous equipment to keep e with modern civilization.

Not all physicians give us up as hopeless ugh. A number of years ago a prominent tor advised us to regard the management ensions as one of the major health prob-s of our time. He said that there were ee things to do about it.

LOOK TO YOURSELF

First, "look inside yourself" — under-nd the glandular meaning of fear, anger, ry and hate; realize that these emotions ually upset the balance of the entire sys-tem in so radical a fashion that they can and will lead to nervous breakdown if indulged in too frequently. Second, "look at yourself" says the doctor. He documents this in a remorseless way: "If we who rush and worry needlessly could see ourselves as others see us, simple pride would stop us. Let a morbidly distraught woman consult her mirror when she is under the lash of our (emotional) tyrants; her face ugly with frowns, her jaws clinched. Cosmetic tricks won't banish these beauty destroyers." Third, "look away from yourself. Practice lifting your mind, every now and again, above the rush and confusion around you. Take time out during your busiest day to think of something pleasant."

I am quite willing to let the physicians look inside us and the beauty experts look at us, but there is something religious faith wants to say about the third—looking away from ourselves. This suggests one answer to the question of the place of devotion in life. The value of this look away from ourselves will depend entirely upon what we look at. The doctor suggests we look at something pleasant. So far, so good, I suppose, but surely we can do better than that! At least historic religion thinks so. It advises us to look away from ourselves by looking toward God.

"I will life up mine eyes unto the hills. Whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth" —is one way of putting it. Another is the Nineteenth Psalm which bids us look away from ourselves not that we may simply enjoy something or other but that we may contemplate and stand in awe of the glory of God, the Creator of all, and rejoice in his care for and mercy toward us. Never has the religious look away from oneself been

put in more personal and sensitive terms than these: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

Here is the very heart of religious devotion: An awareness of God, an awareness of one's dependence upon Him, a sincere acceptance of that relationship. Here is a man—a person like any one of us—honestly and humbly looking away from himself, looking toward God, then in the strength of that, coming back for another look at himself.

PLACE FOR DEVOTION

Once we see what devotion is, what it means, we will make a place for it in our daily life—of that I have no doubt.

Devotion, in a word, is the conscious, habitual effort to look toward God. It is that period in our day when we try to center our thoughts on God, when, through meditation and prayer, we approach Him in a deeply personal way.

The nun reading her prayers as she hurtles toward the loop on the L is engaged in devotion. The man who at a stated time each day reads his Bible and repeats a prayer is engaged in devotions. The person who comes into a chapel for meditation and prayer is engaged in devotions. I have never found a better interpretation of what devotion means to one who practices it than Walter Rauschenbusch's poem "The Little Gate to God."

In the castle of my soul
Is a little postern gate,
Whereat, when I enter,
I am in the presence of God.
In a moment, in the turning of a thought,
I am where God is.
This is a fact.

And then the poet suggests several meanings of this great fact:

This world of ours has length and breadth,
A superficial and horizontal world.
When I am with God
I look deep down and high up,
And all is changed.

LIFE IN PERSPECTIVE

How changed? For one thing, we sense anew the mystery of life, the vastness of the universe, the glory of our privilege of sharing in it. Most of us get so busy with programs and plans and schedules and techniques that we forget the ancient affirmation, "Be still and know that I am God!" We are so preoccupied with our problems, worries and hates that we forget to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"—or in any other way at all, for that matter. We forget to worship. And when we do, life gets wholly out of perspective.

The late H. G. Wells was one of the most gifted men of his generation: brilliant mind, tireless student, keen prophet and an excellent writer. But there was a puzzling despair and doubt hovering over all that he wrote. The longer he lived the gloomier he became until, in his last public interview, he gave up the cause of civilization as hopeless. Wells gives us the clue to his morbid outlook in this autobiographical note, "There was a time when my little soul shone and was uplifted at the starry enigma of the sky. That has gone absolutely. Now I can go out and look at the stars as I look at the pattern of wallpaper on a railway station waiting room."

What a falling off that is from the Psalmist's awed cry, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." John Ruskin was right when he hurled this challenge at a generation that thought the meaning of life could be found in the accumulation of wealth, "I would sooner live in a cottage and wonder at everything, than live in Warwick Castle and wonder at nothing."

MEANING OF LIFE

How long will it take us to learn that when we begin to lose our sense of the mystery of life we shall soon be losing our grip on the meaning of life? And when that happens a good deal of adolescent and half-hysterical bragging is certain to take place about the glory of man. We begin to chant with Swinburne,

Glory to man in the highest
For man is the master of things.

And we wind up dropping atomic bombs all over the world.

One can be proud of the progress man has made, can rejoice in his many rich achievements, and still know that the glory of man is a poor substitute for the glory of God. And no one has known this more truly or stated it more fearlessly than the men whom we gladly acknowledge to be our greatest.

ıey, at least, have no intention of posing God! "Why callest thou me good?" the eatest of all demanded, "There is none od but one, even God!"

Lose that sense of the mystery of life surunding us personally and overarching the nerations, and we will have lost more than desire to worship God; we will soon lose r reason for hope and faith in man, inıding ourselves.

When I am with God
I look deep down and high up
And all is changed.

GOD'S MEANING

The poet suggests another value of devoın—one we have been anticipating in what have just been saying,

When I am with God
All life has a meaning.

It is God's meaning for life that we alıys seek and sometimes find in our devoıns. There is no way of estimating a difrence that this discovery makes in a numr of very concrete ways. It gives us a new swer to the question, "Who am I?"

One of the most poignant lines in *The ath of a Salesman* is Willie Loman's intence, "I have a right to know who I am." course he does. So does every man. One the marks of maturity is the exercise of is right in a thoroughly responsible fashn. But how did Willie Loman try to disver who he was? By looking inside himf, at himself, and never away from himf and never, never, toward God. He was king for the right thing in the wrong ace and in the wrong way. Is it any wonr that he found nothing worth living for, at despair and defeat are the final movents in his spiritual—or should we say piritless"—pilgrimage?

Religion has a conviction, one born of and istered by thousands of years of human perience, that life has a real meaning, d's meaning; that the Willie Lomans of s world, after it, can find it at least in rt; and that in the finding of it we can cover who we are.

As we look away from ourselves, looking vard God in a spirit of devotion, we disver several important facts about life. We cover God as the Creator of all, the One whom "we live and move and have our be-," "Our Father." This is the true setting life, and we must see ourselves in it if we would discover the real meaning of our life. The glory of religious faith is the way it sets everyone and everything against this backdrop of eternity. Sincere devotion guides us to the knowledge that we are the children of God; it never permits us to think that we are god. We begin then with the simple assurance that the most important thing about us, and it ought to be the most important thing to us, is God's purpose in creating us. Once see ourselves as the children of God, and we cannot escape the conviction that we ought so to regard all other men and ought to judge our relationships with them by that fact.

When I am with God
All life has a meaning—
A meaning in which

Big things become small, and small things become great.
The near becomes far, and the future is near.
The lowly and despised is shot through with glory.

TRUE WORTH

What fairer fruit of devotion could one seek than this: A vision of the true worth of what we do day by day? Every preacher needs it, I know. And I am sure every business man, every parent, and every student needs it too. It is appallingly easy to get all mixed up about the relative worth of what we do. When that happens, chaos moves in. We find ourselves measuring the worth of our lives by the number of organizations we belong to rather than by the quality of what we contribute to them and through them. Mothers bemoan the time their families take, thinking they would rather spend it at the bridge table or on the golf links, or even in church organizations. Husbands and wives count a quiet evening at home as "lost" and wish for a continuous whirl of activities outside the house. Students feel that they are missing out on a lot if they concentrate on their studies and give little time to the blinding whirl of campus life.

If we aren't aware of this danger and on guard against it, we will become "hollow men," empty of conviction, empty of purpose, and empty of any sense of real value at all.

I cannot say that the habit of daily devotion is a guarantee that this will not happen, but I can say that it is the best guarantee we have. It reminds me of a small boy's description of what salt is. He said, "Salt is

what spoils the potatoes when you leave it out." Devotion is what spoils life when we leave it out. When we put it in and put it in regularly we have our best chance to keep values in order, our lives in proportion, and our vision of life's meaning bright and beautiful.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The poet assures us, further, that devotion is as deeply social as it is intensely personal:

When I am with God
My fellow men are not far-off and forgotten,
But close and strangely dear . . .
They shine, as if a light were glowing within them
Even those who frown on me
And love me not
Seem part of the great scheme of God.

Devotion, then, is more than the effort of man to rediscover God and himself; it results, consciously or not, in the rediscovery of the true brotherhood of all men.

Most of us believe in the brotherhood of man but in a limited sort of way. That is, we want to pick the brothers who are to be admitted. And when the picking is over we have admitted those who think like we do, believe as we do, perhaps even, pray and look like we do.

The brotherhood of man that great religion talks about is a quite different thing. It actually includes all men, no matter who they are or what they've done. The brotherhood of man that we discover in devotion is of this sort. It includes all—even our enemies. Until one has made that discovery for himself through religious experience it is hard to get him to see that it is not only possible but inescapable. Yet it is possible to feel a deep sense of oneness, understanding of and sympathy with those who on the surface appear to be our enemies. Most of us hesitate over it though, feeling a little like a son did who was exasperated by his wonderful mother's determination to see good in even bad people. "Mother," he exclaimed, "I think you could see good in the devil himself," To which she replied instantly and gravely, "Well, he is persistent."

If we are fond of our fears, our hates and our prejudices, let us stay away from the practice of looking toward God, for in the long run, it will undermine them all by digging down to the firm foundation of the brotherhood of all men—and once there, it will demand that we build a life and a society worthy of the foundation.

CLEANSING OF MIND

Let those who have engaged in it speak about the cleansing and strengthening of mind and spirit that comes through the practice of devotion.

When I am with God
My fear is gone
In the great quiet of God.
My troubles are as the pebbles on the road,
My joys are like the everlasting hills.

Looking toward God can give us at least a portion of peace with the work of each day that seems to have been felt by John Wesley and St. Francis of Assisi. Both were asked essentially the same question and made essentially the same answer.

When John Wesley was asked by a lady how he would spend his time if he knew he would die at 12:00 o'clock the next day at midnight, he answered: "Why, just as I had expected to spend the time. I would preach at Gloucester tonight and tomorrow morning, at Tewkesbury in the afternoon, go to my friend Martin's house for entertainment, converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at 10:00 o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory."

St. Francis was hoeing in his garden when the question was put to him by an ardent follower as to what he would do if he were suddenly to learn that he were to die at sunset that very day. He replied, "I would finish hoeing my garden."

When I am with God life takes on new meaning—this is the unqualified testimony of those who in the fine old phrase have "practiced the presence of God" daily. The greatest gift parents can give is encouragement to look toward God.

Yet there is a sense in which it is misleading to say, "When I am with God." Strictly, we are with Him all of the time. We cannot get away from Him. This is His universe, His world, His life that we live—not ours. He surrounds us like the sunlight surrounds the houses in which we live. Yet we live in darkness. We have let care, worry, fear and hatred pull down the blinds of our minds and seal the doors of our lives until we seem to be lost, alone, forsaken. But it is a lostness, an aloneness, a forsakenness of our own making, not of God's. For He wants to enter in and have communion with us—but we must open the door.

WORTH QUOTING

Continued from page 2

plate. It must be exposed to Christ if the face of Christ is to appear upon it The likeness grows clearer, the vision more beautiful the longer and more completely the heart is exposed to Christ. This portrait of the Master is the supreme treasure of the Christian heart.

—William E. Doughty

* * * *

Bishop Francis Asbury was known as "The Prophet of the Long Road." There was something within him that made him ride and preach and ride and preach. When he was ill with pneumonia and not expected to live, the doctor told him that if he didn't stop his riding and preaching, he would die. "No," replied Asbury, "if I ride and preach not, I shall die. I must ride! ride! ride!" And he got up from his sick bed, saddled his horse and went off in the wilderness because he knew there were still individuals who had not been reached by the eternal message of Christ. Here was that passion and love for humankind that made the Methodist Church such a power in the early democracy as the circuit rider followed every frontier.

—Frank A. Court

* * * *

The real problem of becoming loyal to Christ "comes where people don't actually look for it," writes C. L. Lewis. "It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning is just shaving them all back; just listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other, larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in. And so, all day. Standing back from all your natural fussings and frettings, coming in out of the wind.

* * * *

When Louis XIV lay in state in Notre Dame, everything was done to make the funeral worthy of the occasion. For the conqueror of the Rhine and the builder of Versailles had held the sceptre of France for 70 years. Not without reason had men called him Louis the Great. The preacher for the occasion was Massillon, famous for his power in the pulpit, a man withal of singularly simple and earnest life. He stood a little while silent before the bier of the illustrious monarch and then announced his text: "Lo, I have become great." No doubt, it seemed a fitting text to commemorate the life and deeds of the prince who had been preeminently called "the Great." The preacher stood quite still; his hands were crossed over his breast; his face settled on the coffin; mighty feelings struggled over the features; at last he broke the silence by those very, very simple words: "There is nothing great but God."

—Ralph B. Nesbitt

* * * *

A British theologian, John Oman, after World War I said: "There is a difference between being God's agent and being God's instrument. All of us alike are God's instruments. By no setting of our hearts on wickedness or doing evil with both our hands can we prevent God from using us. Our folly will serve Him when our wisdom fails, our wrath praise Him though our wills rebel." God's agents men may be, God's instruments men must be. God uses all men as one or the other.

—Charles L. Seasholes

* * * *

A certain deacon always closed his prayer-meeting prayer, "And, Lord, clean all the cobwebs out of my life." The same phrase, repeated week after week, got on the nerves of another deacon who jumped up impulsively one night and prayed, "Dear Lord, never mind those cobwebs. Please just kill that spider."

* * * *

It has been said that when human beings feel that life is too much for them, some of them swear, some of them pray, some of them get drunk, and the few well-to-do run down to Florida and lie on the beach and play on the links. But as a means of recovery of mental poise I boldly submit that the most effective of all means is still religion and I am personally convinced that high-priced specialists who are accustomed to send wealthy patients to the golf links and beaches would do well to send some of them to church, being careful where religion is presented, not as an escape from reality, but as a way of meeting reality with faith, courage and a lively sense of responsibility.

—Ernest F. Tittle

* * * *

Many are to be found who desire to occupy a place in the church, but such is the sway which ambition has over the minds of men, that very few are content to continue among the number of the common and undistinguished clan. Almost all are carried away with the frantic desire of rising to distinction, and can never think of being

at ease until they have attained to some station of eminence.

—John Calvin

* * * *

M. Denis Saurat in his book *Regeneration* says that the crisis of our civilization is in essence a religious crisis: "The source of everything that happens to mankind is in the interior life of the individual."

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BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Continued from page 2

(1955 Gray Lectures at Duke University) is a well-written and engaging volume that pin-points the minister's discipline and behind-the-scenes preparation. The ministers, reading — professional and collateral, sermon and worship planning, devotional life, as well as recreation and personal finances are all within the scope of the book . . . An excellent and stimulating book is *Preaching on the Books of the New Testament,* which is "a redigging of the wells of the Bible" that brings to print fresh and sparkling thought. Twenty-nine analyses, each developing sermon on a whole New Testament book, shows the promise of such preaching by illustrating the author's skillful interpretations and insights.

Two Emory University scholars in *Reading the Bible* offer a guidebook, particularly for the layman, which includes methods of Bible study, Biblical translations, Biblical geography, an extended historical outline, and chapters on the significant Bible themes and subjects, along with maps and diagrams . . . *Helping the Bible Speak,* the work of four specialists, tells how to read aloud more effectively and clearly and the emphasizing mechanics of expression and speech. This is a book which ought to prove rewarding to all Bible interpreters.

How relevant are the prophets for Christians today is the burden of *The Prophets—Pioneers to Christianity,* a must-be-read book for pastors, for its pertinence to contemporary life and for the perspectives it gives to the whole scriptural teaching of the pulpit. Dr. Williams' arresting thought, his breadth and discernment, and his verve and spirit make the book a guide to new horizons . . . . Bishop Nygren of the Church of Sweden in *Christ and His Church* penetrates deftly the question of church unity and the theological foundation — the oneness of Christ and his Church — upon which the various communions can find a central anchoring.

Western and Asian Christian leaders join hands in bringing into sharp, clear focus the contemporary work of Christianity in *The Church in Southeast Asia.* This book is part challenge, part appraisal and part provocation, for it sounds a call for a vigorous response to opportunity and need. Much of the book deals with specific sectional illustration, although the entire area is given a general reckoning in a book which should be studied by mission study groups.

Two hundred photographs, plus descriptive commentary and vivid prose, tell the story of one of Christendom's most inspiring personalities in *St. Francis of Assisi.* This handsome volume, through the photography of an eminent craftsman, brings the milieu and mood of Francis to life in a way no definitive prose biography can.

The Religious Experience of Isaiah

THEODORE P. FERRIS, Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts

William James has prepared us for the act that there are varieties of religious experience. In 1902 he published his Gifford Lectures under the title, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Different people have different experiences of the same God, and that is exactly what you would expect. Different people listening to the same music hear different things. Some people listening to the modern music of Bartok cringe, and others thrill with excitement. Different people looking at the same pictures see completely different things, and make different responses, and different people living in the same city get entirely different impressions of it depending on where they live, how large the circle of their interest is, and what their background may be.

Take four giants in the field of religion: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul and Peter—all different in temperament, personality, background, equipment, everything that makes them men. They all have different experiences of the same God. What I propose to do is to look up at them as carefully as we can, one by one, to see if perchance they may look down upon and into us, and help us perhaps to understand better than we do the fragments of religious experience that we may or may not have had, enlarging our own experience by showing us theirs which is perhaps different from ours and, above all, warning us that no one person has the right to impose his own particular religious experience on anyone else, for there are varieties of ways in which different people encounter the self-same God. And we begin with Isaiah.

WHAT HE SAW

Fortunately for us, Isaiah left a written description of his religious experience. This is the way it begins, like great music: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." What did he see? Nothing, actually. At least, not in the sense that he saw the Temple in which he happened to be at the time that this experience took place. It is something like this. A man takes a trip around the world, and he sees for the first time people of all kinds and conditions. When he gets back, he says, "I read Wendell Willkie's book, *One World,* when it came out, and I accepted it theoretically, but now I *see* it." What does he see? Nothing, actually, but he grasps something in his understanding, and the sight that he is talking about is insight.

In that sense, Isaiah "saw" that all the ups and downs of life are under the mastery of an overruling Power. And that is something to see! All the ups and downs of life, the changes and chances, the accidents and inexplicable incidents, the failures and achievements, are not at loose ends, dancing an unintelligible jig, but are under the orders of a Supreme Commander. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." This was not Fate that Isaiah saw, not the blind weaving patterns of human life and history, not that. Nor was it Destiny, an impersonal goal to which human life in history is being driven without any consideration of the individual, or the needs and temperaments of the people who are in that great drift of history, not that. Not even what Anne Lindbergh, in search of something which to my mind at least is basically sound, called "the wave of the future," the wave of future events which will sweep in upon the shores of the world and carry out with it the debris as well as the treasures, oblivious of the differences. What Isaiah saw was God presiding over the affairs of the world with intelligence and love and justice. "Man proposes," so the French proverb goes, "God disposes." That is what Isaiah saw.

Isaiah had been brought up on that; it was nothing new to him. The religion of his people really began with the idea that God is King. He heard that from his mother and father, he had taken part in the worship of the God who reigns over all life, but now he saw it for himself, vividly. Not as something you would arrive at at the end of an elaborate argument or debate, by way of logic, not that at all. He saw it by the much more mysterious way of the illuminated

imagination, a flash of religious insight, when suddenly, as he was engaged in prayer and meditation, probably in the Temple, in time of great national disturbance, he saw for himself what he had been taught to believe all his life, that God was King, that there was over the ups and downs of life an overruling, mastering power.

THE TRUTH HE SAW

That happens to many of us, I think. We are brought up, for instance, to believe that a man should be good not because it pays to be good, but because it is good to be good. We accept that as part of our moral inheritance, and then suddenly when one of our friends risks his life to save the life of another, we "see" it, we are converted to it, we feel it in our bones, we have no doubts at all about it, we know that it is good to be good for its own sake. So, all of us have these experiences from time to time, not necessarily one intense, decisive experience like Isaiah's, but experiences all along the line, when we come to see these things, to understand them, to take them in and accept them, things that we have known all along, inherited from our fathers and mothers, and from the civilization in which we are brought up. These are our conversions, to so speak, when we see for ourselves the truth by which we then freely choose to live.

And also notice that Isaiah "saw" this in the year that King Uzziah died (about 740 B. C.). He died after a long and prosperous reign, over forty years, something like Victoria reigning over England. It was a period of immense prosperity, and then at the end he was stricken with leprosy, and he died under the shadow of that dreadful disease which was not only a physical disaster, but was also a blight upon him morally because the popular opinion of the time interpreted it as a punishment for some inner weakness or sin. And as his reign came to an end, everything seemed to come to an end. At that time when everything was going to pieces, so to speak, Isaiah had this insight, whatever you want to call it, this vision of the God who does not go to pieces. When other things were crashing, he saw something that did not crash.

Without pausing now to point out the implications of this, because I am sure you already see them, isn't it true that sometimes our greatest openings come at the very time when things are closing in upon us? Isn't it true that for you and me some of the things that have been made most clear and vivid, some of the very foundations upon which we stand, have been revealed to us in times when all the foundations of our normal life were shaking and we wondered if we would survive another day?

Once Isaiah saw that there was a God who controlled the world, he knew that the only thing for a man to do was to give in to Him. He heard, as it were, again with the ears of his inner mind or imagination, he heard God saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And without any hesitation, he said, "Here am I, send me." He might have written, he did not of course, but he might have written the forty-sixth Psalm. Probably the Psalm was inspired by the spirit of Isaiah's teaching. The Psalmist said, "Be still, and know that I am God." Put in much less beautiful language, but more accurately, it means, Give in, and admit that I am God. Isaiah realized that if God was really master of human life, the only way people and nations could make their life amount to anything at all, was to co-operate and co-ordinate with the will and purpose of God. When God sent him out to do His work in the world, he knew that he was being sent out to tell his people that, because they were not doing God's will, because they were going their own way, they were on their way to destruction. That is quite a mission to be sent on: to tell people that they are doomed. If your religious experience were not a powerful one, you would not do it. Isaiah did it, relieving his message of destruction later on with the hope of a remnant who would see the light.

OUR EXPERIENCE

Have you ever seen anything like that? Have you ever experienced anything like that? We are, of course, primarily interested in looking at these four great types of religious experience and trying to see them objectviely, but in sermons we are not lecturing, we are trying to bring them into our own experience, and my concern now is with you and me. Have you ever had any experience comparable to that? Probably not. Not on so vast, so grand a scale as this.

I imagine that there are few people here who have not in their own personal and individual lives had the experience as they went on through the years that over and above the things that they were doing and the decisions that they were making and the failures that they were accountable for, there was something else moving them on toward some destiny which they could see only dimly, but toward which they were being drawn. There are, I think, very few

eople who at points in their own life do not el able to say, "There is a divinity that apes my end, rough-hew it how I will." ut probably you have not had any such exerience as Isaiah. After all, you are not aiah. You are not a giant in the spiritual orld, perhaps, and should not expect to ave any such experience as his. But perhaps it is because you look for God in different directions.

Many of us look at nature to find God. e work in our gardens, for example. We osen the soil, we plant the seed, we see e first shoot appear above the earth; we ltivate it, we tend it, we see it flower, delop, blossom, and in the very mystery of owth and in the beauty of the flower we ave at least a vague sense of something at is beyond us and that, while our gardens vary and change, year after year, and e flowers come and go, the energy, the ysterious power of growth goes on forever. r, we look at ourselves. In this modern ge of introspection and self-exmaination, e are likely, if we are looking for God, to rn inward and see our weakness. Not always, of course, but in crises we recognize e fact that we are weak, that we are not dequate to the situations in life which we ust face and handle. We recognize our ependence upon people outside ourselves d powers that are beyond ourselves, and rtinly some of us at certain times see that e are sinners, and we are likely to find God that very need of ours, and we turn to Him desperation as a way out of inadequacy d weakness, to cleanse us from our guilt d to establish us against our stubborn bits.

DIRECTION TO GOD

Isaiah, of course, wasn't anything like at at all. He looked in altogether different directions. He hardly noticed nature; lived in the city, he was not a product of e romantic literature of the nineteenth ntury. Nature, to him, if he saw it at all, as more likely to hide God than to reveal im. Nor was he at all concerned with mself. One of the things that interests e about Isaiah is that in his whole record hardly ever speaks of himself as the object his pre-occupation. Jeremiah, as we will e next is quite different, but Isaiah doesn't end his time examining himself. He has no orbid sense of guilt, no personal anxieties. e did not come to God because he was a nner; he found out that he was a sinner cause he had found God. I am not going to use to comment on that but it is something worth thinking about, because there are movements in Christianity at this particular stage in its life which go about making people guilty of their sin first, and when they get them down deep, wallowing in the mire of their guilt, then they think they can help them find God. That is one way, perhaps; it is not the way of Isaiah. He came to God not because of any sense of sin. On the contrary, he found his sense of sin when his eyes had seen the King.

As a matter of fact, Isaiah saw God in what was going on in the world, and this was something entirley different. Right before his eyes he saw his own little country of Judah, and its brother to the north, Israel, declining rapidly. They were running down hill just as surely and rapidly and inevitably as water runs down hill. Why? To the northeast he saw Assyria rising with power and prestige and military might. Why? Judah and Israel were declining because they refused to do the things that God expected of them; they had gone their own way of injustice and unrighteousness and made their plots and plans and political intrigues; they had not trusted their God. They were going downward. And Assyria was coming up as an instrument in the hand of the Lord to bring Israel and Judah into line again. He saw Ahaz, the King, weak and vacillating, in panic. Why was he in panic? Because he was not willing to trust God, and was trying to make impossible political alliances which would save the country, and which Isaiah knew were powerless. In what was going on in the world, in history, in the course of events, Isaiah felt the drive and the presence of the living God.

We might not interpret it in exactly the same way, but perhaps we who have been so accustomed to finding God in nature and in ourselves should look in this direction, look at what is going on in the world. The first thing you think of is the rebellion of the Colonials, South Africa, North Africa, French Morocco, Indo-China, and all through the Middle East. Then you think of the rise of the Asiatic peoples who have been submerged through all these centuries of our growth and development and enrichment. As you look at the world and see these things, can you perhaps see the God who is calling the signals? The signals are clear and plain; the signal is to play the game fair and straight, the signal is to trust in Him and not in power and might and money. And the nations refuse to listen to the signals. They prefer to play it rough, to take the chances on the side of power and money and prestige

and might, and they go down as the Colonials come up, and the submerged people of Asia begin to assert themselves.

THE WILL OF GOD

I am trying to lead you into this idea by way of suggestion. At the beginning of this year there was an editorial in the *New York Times*. The title of it was "The Year We Have to Make." It was a good editorial and it began with this sentence, "We can say this year more than ever before that the future depends upon the courage, resolution and the energy of democratic man." Does it? Entirely? Partly, to be sure, and in one sense. But does the future depend entirely on what we do? Isaiah would not think so. Isaiah would say that the future depends upon how man co-ordinates his will and his action with the divine purposes of the most high God, and the future will depend on what God does, not on what man does. And the last sentence in it was this: "The seasons come and go, with their good and bad weather, their blizzards, hurricanes and floods, but it is what men do that makes or breaks the year." Is it, entirely? Or is there something else, a kind of destiny, a kind of power written into the very nature of the universe, which we think of in terms of God, that is moving us along certain ways, and will have His way in the end whether we stand or fall?

You see, there are two poles in religion, at least in our religious tradition. One is the Will of God, that is the Determining Factor. The other is the freedom of man. These are opposites, paradoxical. It is almost impossible to hold them in one hand, and at the same time, and to see them at the same moment. Norman Cousins has tried to put it into words this way: "Free will and determinism are like a game of cards. The hand that is dealt you represents determinism. The way you play your hand represents free will." For the last century, more or less, we in our tradition in Protestantism have been concentrating on the way we play our hand, and I am not detracting anything from the value or rightness of that. May it not be that now is the time for us to take a lead from Isaiah and concentrate on the hand that is dealt to us? What are the cards? What do they mean? What do they say? We cannot change them, we only accept them and play them confidently.

There are times when the thing for us to do is to be up and doing. There are other times when the thing for us to do is to bow down before the inscrutable Will of God who is high and lifed up, sitting upon a throne above all nations, and whose train fills the temple of our world with His beauty and His goodness and His love. I hope that you who are frequently in this Temple of God may from time to time have glimpses, at least, of that God who is above and beyond the world we live in and whose will must be done if we are to live.

II. The Religious Experience of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was born a little less than a hundred years after Isaiah, and six hundred and fifty years before Christ. That shows you approximately where he stands in the great panorama of human history. He was born in a little town four miles northeast of Jerusalem, just about an hour's walk, called Anathoth. His father was a priest and his father before him; in fact, he came from a long line of priestly men, and he was born into a family which had cultivated and preserved for generations the best that there was in the Hebrew religion.

He was a sensitive, shy boy, and we can picture him in our imagination using the material that he gives us later on in his own book, living a rather lonely life in that little town, brooding over the bare hills of his native landscape. Even though he was raised in an exceedingly religious environment, when he became a man, in the early twenties, he had what we would call a "religious experience." What I want to do first is to look into that experience as carefully and reverently as we can, and see it as he himself described it.

CONVERSATION WITH GOD

He describes it, interestingly enough, in terms of a conversation with God. First God speaks to him, and then he speaks to God, and as we pointed out in reference to Isaiah, he was hearing in the same sense that Isaiah was seeing, not with the outward ear or with the outward eye, but with the inner ear and the inner understanding. Now, in that conversation between God and Jeremiah three things are made clear.

First, he had an overwhelming sense of being chosen to do a certain job. He was overcome with the conviction that his life work had been cut out for him, had been predetermined from the very beginning of things. Most of you probably, certainly it is

ue of a large percentage of people, choose ur own career. At some point in your life, you are a man, you decided whether you anted to be a doctor or a dentist, or a law-r, or even a minister, or a businessman or artist, or a playboy. And if you are a oman, you decided at one point in your life hether you wanted to be a business woman, the keeper of a home and the mother of a mily. Occcasionally, however, you find meone who feels called to do something. ith him it is not so much a matter of oice; it isn't really a matter of choice at l. It is more like a compulsion.

There are people who have a feeling from e very beginning that the stage or music medicine or the ministry or business is eir life; they have no choice about it. Jere-iah was one of these. At this particular me in his life he was overcome with a sense at God had chosen him to be a prophet. A ophet is a person we do not see much of wadays, so it is difficult for us to under-and exactly what was involved in that mis-on. A prophet is a man who speaks for od, and in those days when prophecy rose its highest peak of influence and power, e prophets were moral and spiritual guides the nation. So Jeremiah in his conversa-on with God heard God say this to him, Before I formed thee in the womb I knew ee, And before thou camest forth I set thee art; A prophet to the nations I ordained ee." He was, you see, from the very be-nning, a child of destiny.

JEREMIAH'S WITHDRAWAL

The second thing that his conversation th God makes clear is that he instinctively thdrew from the call. He knew, of course, hat it meant. He knew that to be one of e outspoken ones was to be one of the popular ones, just as true now, inciden-lly, as it was then. He knew that if he was tell the people what the will of God really as and what their future was to be, he ould be unpopular, hated, persecuted, out-st. He knew that their future was de-ruction, and he knew that they would not elcome any such message. Hence, he shrank om it. His strength, at least a part of it, as his exquisite sensitiveness. He was ive, he felt things more acutely than the dinary person feels them but, as it so of-n happens, not only with a person like eremiah, but with people like you and me, s strength was also his weakness. A sen-tive person can easily become a self-cen-red person, easily hurt, easily offended, sily defeated. Jeremiah, therefore, was reluctant to accept the assignment; he was afraid, and his reply to God was this: "I cannot speak, I am too young." We have no way of knowing, of course, but if we listen to that reply and listen to it with our imaginations, it might be fair to say that it was one part modesty, one part fear, and one part selfishness.

The third thing that is made clear is that he was sure that if he was called to do this particular task, he would be given the strength to do it. In other words, his objections were quickly overruled. He had not lived very long, but he had lived enough to see people who did do the impossible, who though they were young and inexperienced did speak with power, who though they were weak and fearful did face obstacles and overcome them. He knew this. Therefore, he was prepared for the fact that he might do the same thing himself. He heard God speak: "Say not, you are too young; to whomsover I send you shall you go, and whatsoever I command you, shall speak. I fortify you this day like a town, a bronze wall, against the whole land." And he did go. And he was unpopular; he was put in prison, and left for dead at the bottom of a well; he did speak the things that he believed in his heart without shrinking, and he did survive; he lived through the fall of Jerusalem and the first years of the Exile, and he stands now at just about the highest point that any of his fellow countrymen, save One, has ever reached.

There in that experience, intense as it is, and far beyond any of the experiences that you and I, perhaps, will ever have, are the three pillars, the three keystones of all religious experience: a sense of mission, a purpose in life; a sense of inadequacy, the shrinking, the withdrawal, the recognition of your own inferiority of the task assigned. And then the sense of power.

JEREMIAH AND ISAIAH

Now I should like to explore this experience further by comparing it with Isaiah's. They were different, very different sorts of religious experience, and you would, I think, expect this if you know anything about these matters because the men were so different. Isaiah, as you see him on the pages of his own book (we have, of course, no biography of these men; we can only read between the lines, but you can read quite a lot between the lines if you read carefully), was the kind of person whom we would call an extravert, out-going, objective, entirely and completely unselfconscious, not at all preoccupied with

himself or his own sins, or the machinery of his own psychological life. He was a statesman by nature and he took his place with ease in the courts of kings.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, was an entirely different person. He was sensitive, introspective, looking within, tempted to trace motives and fears and hopes in himself a poet by nature and talent, a disposition rather darker than Isaiah's, always inclined to see the dark side rather than the bright, "the prophet of tears" he has been called, tending to withdraw from painful situations. This is of some interest to us because we are all different, and it prepares us for the fact that God comes to all of us and that our job is to be what we are and not what we are not. How many times, perhaps, like me you wish you were an extravert, but you are not. Be yourself. God made you what you are, and God comes to each person according to the mould in which He cast him; you must expect to find God through your own temperament and your own disposition, as you are.

You would expect the experiences to be different, and they were. Isaiah put his experience in the form of a vision of God. It was something he saw, and you remember that vision; how majestic it was. He saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the Temple. It was the vision of the king in all his glory, surrounded by his royal courtiers. Jeremiah, on the other hand, put his experience in terms of a conversation that he had with God. In other words, to one man it came through the eyes, to another through the ears. Isaiah was by nature visual; Jeremiah was by nature a person whose auditory faculties were more highly developed. He was a master of words. Read for yourself sometime what he wrote. Just for a sample—I couldn't bear to leave out one sample of the words, simply for the sheer beauty and the music of them, even though they are translated into our language which is so different from his. After a battle had waged through a town, this is what he wrote:

Death has come up through our windows—
Has entered our halls,

Cutting off the child from the street—
The youths from the square.

And the corpses of men lie prone
On the open field,
Like sheaves behind the reaper,
With none to gather.

He was a master of words and sounds, and it is no wonder that when God approached him, he approached him by way of his ear.

GOD SPEAKING PERSONALLY

Another difference. Isaiah saw God "high and lifted up, sitting upon a throne." In other words, it was a vision of God exalted, transcendent above all earthly circumstances. Jeremiah heard God speaking to him personally. It is an extraordinary contrast when you think of it. Isaiah, on the one hand, giving us a glimpse of the grandeur of God which fills us with awe, and Jeremiah daring to put his experience in terms of a personal conversation which he himself had with the Almighty. This contrast is emphasized even more later on in both descriptions. When Isaiah confessed his sense of guilt and sin, one of the seraphim, that is one of the angelic courtiers, took a live coal from the altar in a pair of tongs, and placed it on Isaiah's lips, and said this: "This hath touched thy lips: thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." This is a regal, formal procedure. When Jeremiah confessed his inadequacy and weakness, "the Lord himself put his hand on my mouth." Personal, intimate, close.

Isaiah, again, had a sense of sin and guilt as the result of his vision of God, whereas Jeremiah speaks not at all of sin, although I am sure that he knew enough about sin to know what his own sins were, but in place of sin he had a sense of weakness. And Isaiah had the sense of being forgiven, whereas Jeremiah had the realization that he was fortified to do the thing he had to do. A vivid contrast you see; two quite different experiences of God.

Both experiences have something to say to us. God is far away, God is great, and God is also near. "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabiters thereof are as grasshoppers." That is one element in our knowledge and thought of God, that He sits above the world, presiding over the world's affairs. Yet, on the other hand, "He knoweth mine downsitting and mine uprising," and comes down every single individual's private stair and speaks to his condition and to his heart and his mind. We need both experiences of God, the transcendent and the immanent, the far and the near.

Also, all of us are sinners, at least some of the time, but some people are simply sick. Some people deliberately and willfully do things that they know are not right, contrary to the will of God and to the moral

v. Other people do the same things, not liberately, but because there are blocks in eir nervous and psychological systems. ıey need to be healed and helped, and not nted and hounded by the preacher's fury. emphasize this again because it troubles e that in so many parts of Christendom day there seems to be only one theme for sermon and that is "The Sin of Mankind." sus is never recorded in the Gospels to ve tried to make people conscious of their ns. He made them conscious of himself and e love of God, in the light of which they ere often convicted by their sins. What he ed to make them feel was that God loved em just the same. It is one thing, a fairly sy thing, to condemn sin. It's quite another ing to understand and love the sinner.

JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE

And here is another fact about both these en. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah had some- ing unpleasant to say. Putting it in words at are more familiar to us than the words the Bible, what they were continually ying was this: the nation is riding for a l! They used all sorts of figures; Jere- ah with his imagination, of course, reach- the heights. The nation is like an un- ithful wife, wooded and courted by a fine sband, responding to his love in the early ars, and then being unfaithful and run- ıg after every lover that pursued her on the hills and high places of the land. Or, e a vineyard that has been cultivated and ken care of for years by a gardener that ved it above all things, and when it was ne to produce grapes brought forth wild apes. Or, like an impatient farmer who ought that the well wasn't big enough, and in place of the well he dug an artificial tern and lived on that stagnant water in eference to the fresh, clear water that d gave him in the natural springs. In ch case the future is black; the wife is t, the vineyard destroyed, the cistern isonous.

If these two men were speaking to us to- y, you can be sure that they would have ngs to say to us that we would not like any more than the people liked what they said then. They would say to us that there are some things you cannot do and live. In terms of the nation I have put down three or four things that came to my mind; you can extend the list. You cannot use hydrogen bombs and their like and live. You cannot gorge yourself while others starve and live. You cannot overcome evil with evil, ever, and live. You cannot make money the goal of your existence and live a healthy, good national life. We do not say these things Sunday after Sunday because it is better not to say them so often that they become dull, and also, as a Christian, we have more positive and affirmative things to say. But they should be said from time to time because that is part of the prophet's mission, to tell the people of the future and to warn them of the dangers that lie ahead.

Jeremiah, however, has something more positive to say to us as individuals, and I leave that with you as his final word, even though I can put it only briefly, not from lack of time, but because there isn't much I can say about it in terms of your own life. This is what he has to say to you. You have been set apart by God for some special job in life. Do you know what it is? Are you just drifting along like pieces of debris brought up by the tide without any feeling of purpose except to feed yourself and keep warm and happy? If you are in that situation, you had better find out what it is before it is too late.

I remember an old hymn my grandmother used to sing, "Dare to be right, dare to be true, You have a work that no other can do." It may not be a spectacular piece of work; it may be taking care of somebody who needs you, it may be suffering and bearing some burden bravely, it may be showing others how to suffer losses; it may be running a big business or industry in a way that will make it contribute to the real richness of our life; or it may be that God has set you apart to be a channel for His love, to be a reconciling instrument in a world of tension and hatred.

I. The Religious Experience of Paul

We have tried to enter into the religious perience of two giants of the Old Testa- nt, Isaiah and Jeremiah. We knew, of rse, when we began that in one sense no man being can ever completely enter into experience of another human being, especially when that experience deals with the very depths of life itself. In that same spirit, and recognizing that same difficulty, we turn to Paul the Apostle.

We are on much more familiar ground than we were before. Not only is Paul nearer

to us in point of time by at least six or seven hundred years, but also he takes us back once again into the world of the New Testament. We breathe its air with delight. When we have been out of that world for a season, we appreciate more than ever what it means to move once again in it, for no matter what we may believe theologically, or think we believe or do not believe, as a matter of fact all of us see God through Jesus Christ, and it is almost impossible for us to enter into a religious experience of any kind in which he is entirely absent.

Also, the ground is more familiar because in dealing with Paul we are dealing with a man who had a personal problem. We are familiar with personal problems; we all have them. In fact, we might say that in our generation we thrive on personal problems. Novelists use them as the subject matter for their stories, dramatists write plays about them, the psychiatrists analyze them and try to solve them, and the popular religious books use them as the springboard for their appeal to the masses of people who need help. I suppose it is fair to say that if we have any religious experience at all, it is likely to be in terms of our personal problems, some felt inner need that has been met by outside help, some anxiety or fear that has been allayed and calmed, some habit that has been overcome. This is the terminology in which most of us would speak about our religious experience. We feel more at home, therefore, with Paul than with either Isaiah or Jeremiah.

A LOOK AT PAUL

Before we look at Paul's problem, suppose we look at Paul himself. I am going to ask you to try to set aside for the time being all your preconceived ideas of Paul, and I know that some of you have very strong preconceptions about him, and some entirely misconceived notions of him. Try to put them out of your mind for the time being; you can come back to them later on and cherish them the rest of your life but, for the moment, let us try to look at Paul as though we had never heard anything of him before and had made no judgments about him whatsoever.

He came from Tarsus, a large important city, the capital of the province, on the Mediterranean, about ten miles north of the coast, just around the corner, so to speak, from Antioch. About a million people inhabited it. It was a commercial center, as well as the seat of a famous university. It was a Greek city in its culture and yet, of course, like all the cities of the civilized world, it was under Roman rule.

His family were Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews were very much the same sort of people then that they are now; they kept with meticulous care both the moral and the ceremonial law. This in a very real way separated them from the rest of the community in which they lived. It was designed to separate them, to keep them uncontaminated from the pagan world. So that Saul as a small boy would never have been allowed to go to supper with any of his Greek friends because a Jewish boy did not eat a meal with a Gentile, ever. It is only natural that when he grew up his family wanted to be sure that he was trained in the tradition of their Pharisaic forefathers, and so they sent him away from the cosmopolitan center of pagan learning and philosophy back to Jerusalem to be trained by the great rabbi Gamaliel, just as many parents originally from New England, perhaps living now in the Orient, send their children back to Boston to be sure they are grounded in the tradition of their Puritan forefathers.

There are, then, these three great strands of culture mingling in Paul, and this is of primary significance in any real understandinging of Paul's achievement. He was a Jew by birth, a Greek by association and absorption—he spoke the Greek language—and a Roman by citizenship. In one sense you might say that he stood on the dividing line between the East and the West, the Oriental world with its mysticism, its religion of the Jews, the high, ethical monotheism which they had brought into the world and, on the other hand, the Occident, the Roman Empire with its laws and efficiency, its management and government, its roads and all that it has contributed to our modern western culture. There stood Paul on the dividing line, combining in himself the elements of both.

MAN OF THE WORLD

He was more like us than either Isaiah or Jeremiah in the sense that both of them were provincial people. There is no reason to believe that either one ever left his Judean hills, or ever stepped over the boundaries of the tiny country that he lived in. Paul, on the other hand, was a man of the world. Well educated, according to the standards of his day, highly intelligent, in the right sense of the word you could call him sophisticated; he was widely traveled, an experienced man of the world.

He was a contemporary of Jesus. We have no way of knowing exactly when he was

rn, but we do know that he lived at about e same time that Jesus lived. Whether the ro men ever met or not we have no way of owing. There is no positive evidence one ay or the other. It would seem to us that Paul had ever met Jesus, he would have entioned it in one of the letters, but he did t. The implication is, therefore, that these ro amazing men who might easily have met ch other never did. But it is important to member that when Paul met the risen, orified Jesus on the Damascus road, he as no stranger to the Christ, because he d met the Christ spirit over and over ain in the Christian community; he was stranger to the new and unparalleled irit of love that prevailed in a little group persecuted and disappointed people. This ul had met, and this he could never get t of his mind.

He was, of course, from the very begin- ng a controversial figure. He was either ed or hated. He invited both. Many peo- e loved him dearly, and it certainly is the ar implication of his letters that he loved ny people with an abounding affection. metimes people think that Paul was a d, impersonal man lacking in affection. e assignment for them is to read the last apters of all the Epistles where he sends affectionate greetings to Aquila and iscilla, Titus and Timothy, and innumer- le other close friends that he made on his vels. Indeed, he is a controversial figure this day and no one can be neutral about n. He is also a decisive figure, and no e can rationally overlook him. If an im- rtial historian were making a list of the most decisive human beings that have er lived in the world, East or West, cer- nly one of them would be the Apostle ul.

PAUL'S PROBLEM

Now let us look at the problem. Paul's blem in a single word was *guilt*. I know t this is over-simplifying a deeply com- cated personal problem, and I hesitate to it. And yet, as I said once before in these mons on the giants of the religious life, y must be sermons and not lectures, and cannot take the scholar's way here and into all the ins and outs, the possibilities l the speculations of the case. We must t it in some simple way that we as sin- e, devout followers of Jesus can grasp, hout doing any violent injustice to the n whom we are studying.

What is guilt? We talk about it all the e. It is one of the big words in our cur- rent vocabulary. Isn't it this? Guilt is the sense of having done something wrong. It involves, of course, the sense of knowing what is right, which you have in one way or another knowingly violated. We would all, I think, agree that there is a normal and an abnormal sense of guilt. If a child, for instance, is sent off to school, and before he gets to school changes his mind and thinks he would like to go fishing, by the time he gets home in the late afternoon he knows that he has done something wrong. In other words, he has a sense of guilt. He knows that he has violated something he normally accepts to be right. He goes home to his parents and admits what he has done before they discover it, and he is willing to suffer the consequences of his escapade. He is not afraid of his parents because there is a relationship between them of understanding and, therefore, he in perfect harmony with them through all this unhappy procedure and when it is over he forgets it. Another child goes fishing instead of going to school, or perhaps he may not even go fishing; he may only wish that he had the courage to go fishing instead of going to school. He has parents that no matter what he does, he can never please them, and consequently their relationship is always strained. He can never look them squarely in the face whether he has done anything dreadfully wrong or not. So when he is overcome by the sense of having done something wrong, he stays away from the family. He does not go near them until he is forced to because he is afraid of what will happen.

SENSE OF GUILT

Might we not then say this? A normal sense of guilt is the sense of having done something wrong; an abnormal sense of guilt is the *fear* of having done something wrong, or that you might do something wrong. Paul suffered from this abnormal sense of guilt. According to his religious training, which was of the very best, and it must be carefully noted that we are not saying anything to detract from the Hebrew religion at its highest but, according to his religious training, God was a God who demanded perfection. He was a God of Law and He demanded to be obeyed. Paul was a sensitive and conscientious boy and he took that demand seriously. He knew what the rules were and he knew that he could never keep them. He knew that no matter what he did, he could never please God, he could never stand in the presence of God with anything but a troubled conscience. He was haunted, therefore, all

his life by a sense of having done something wrong and that he was lost, that he was doomed, even damned. He harks back to it in the letter that he wrote later to the Romans. "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Wretched he was indeed, as only a few have ever been, the few who have been tortured by the discrepancy between the perfect goodness of God and their own shabby shortcomings.

Another thing to think about is that the sense of guilt that most of us have today is not exactly like Paul's. Paul's guilt was a fear of having offended God and standing in dread before the Almighty Judgment. Our guilt, I say ours, I suppose I should not say that, perhaps I am speaking only for myself, but my guilt, normally, is a fear of having offended public opinion and running into consequences that make life difficult for me. Most of us do not have a vivid enough sense of God to have the kind of guilt that Paul had, and we must not easily equate the kind of guilt we have with the guilt that wracked Paul's whole being.

PAUL'S SOLUTION

So much then for the problem. Now for the solution. It was solved of course, in a dramatic way. The story is familiar to all of you and I shall not take precious time to repeat it. It happened just outside the city of Damascus. Paul was probably living there at the time. He was trying, among other things, to exterminate the followers of Jesus before they completely destroyed the Old Testament ceremonial Law.

We either idolize or hate the people who have what we do not have and wish we did have. A boy without any prowess whatsoever in athletics either idolizes or hates the great athlete. Paul did not have the freedom, the liberty and the peace that the Christians had. He did not idolize them; he hated them. He turned against them in the hot fury of his stormy temperament.

Out of a clear sky he saw Jesus. Do not ask him to be too explicit. The story of the event as Luke reports it on three occasions in the Acts of the Apostles is confused as far as the details go, and they do not agree with each other. Paul, more wisely, does not give any details. When he speaks about it in his letters, all he says is that he saw the Lord. "And last of all he was seen of me also." In the same vivid, objective way—and by objective we do not necessarily mean physical—but in the real way that the others saw him after the Resurrection, Paul als saw him.

His problem was solved by the love of Go communicated to him through Jesus Christ Here theologians and scholars have led peo ple through labyrinths of arguments an theories about what Paul meant, trying t explain what happened, and the truth is tha in the last analysis you cannot explain wha happened; don't try to explain it. All yo know is that into Paul's experience of God which had heretofore been limited to law and obedience, there was infused a love tha changed his whole relationship with God an completely altered his life. And that love o God was made real to Paul by the death o Jesus. He had heard about the love of Go all his life. The love of God is in the Ol Testament; this was not a new idea to any body living in those days; but it never reach ed Paul. He never felt it until he faced th death of Christ, and in that voluntary offer ing of a perfect life, it dawned upon him— how shall we put it?—he felt for the firs time two things: one, that God cared whethe he sinned or not. He was not saying (mar this well) It's all right whether you do; don' think anything about it. God really care whether he sinned or not. And two, Go cared *for him,* whether he sinned or not.

In other words, when he saw Christ h found the God who demanded everythin and at the same time accepted everything accepted him as he was, as a creature tryin to do his best with all the natural tendencie to do wrong, and yet striving to overcom them, and rising as much as he might up wards toward the demands of God. Thi set him free; it saved him; this solved hi problem of guilt. Sinner though he still was he could now stand in the presence of God His salvation was not in anything he did, i was in something that happened to him, i something that was done to and for him. H was saved when he lost himself in Christ an in the community in which Christ manifeste himself. If we put it in a sentence, and w are trying to generalize here because I hop you are all the time reading your own experi ence into this, it might be this: *No man i ever saved by discipline, only by devotion* That is not to say that we can live withou discipline. Heaven forbid! But a life of dis cipline only is a life that is withered an shrunken and, in the end, frustrated. It i the life of devotion, trained on the trellis o discipline, that is full and flowering.

Two brief comments in conclusion. Th first is this: Paul does not speak to every one with the same appeal. You would not ex

t him to. No man does. A man who has n saved from alcoholism by the Alcoholics onymous group does not speak with the ne appeal to a person who has never had t problem, as he does to one who has. In same way, Paul does not speak with the ne appeal to a person who has never had struggle with an abnormal sense of guilt he does to the person who has. Second, ul is the greatest interpreter of Christ, not the only one; there are others. And others speak to you, then listen to them. But Paul has this to say to everyone. We ll put it simply in single sentences, which ope you will fill in for yourself. He has s to say to you whether you have his particular problem or not. First: a life without love is lost. Law is not enough. Second: there is no love without a person. Abstract love, love in general, is something beyond our power either to imagine, to give, or to receive. Third: Jesus is the love of God in a human life. One of the great sentences he wrote when he was at his most inspired peak is in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, where he wrote this: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And it is the face that makes the difference.

. The Religious Experience of Peter

We have already looked at and into, as as we could at least, the religious experie of three spiritual giants, Isaiah, Jereah and Paul. Now we turn to Peter. Of se four men, certainly Peter is the most proachable. There is a grandeur about iah that keeps us at a reverent distance. remiah's personal suffering is almost more n we can bear at times, and we hesitate go far beyond the threshold of his life. d the scale of Paul's mental and spiritual ture is forbidding, to say the least. But er is different. He is a plain man; he no unusual talents or gifts as far as we see; no faculties or capacities that put in a class by himself. He has, on the er hand, many common weaknesses that and I have. The other three are admire; Peter is lovable.

When we turn to his religious experience, first mipression is that it is hard to find, we wonder, secretly, whether he had any erience comparable to the other three. reach very soon, I think, the conclusion t Peter had no one catastrophic religious erience. He had, rather, a life-long loy to Jesus. More commonplace than the ers, perhaps, but no less powerful or real.

ALONG CAME JESUS

t began when he was a young man, prob y in the twenties. He was a fisherman. was brought up with his brother, Anw, in his father's business, and probably ust about this time he and Andrew were dy to take over the business and run it partnership with their cousins, James and n. And as business went in that part of world and at that time, it was a good iness, the means of a good livelihood. In untry where there were few sources of me, this was one of the chief. He lived with his wife, his wife's mother, and his brother Andrew in Capernaum, which was a fairly sizable town on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

He was not highly educated; if he were alive today, we should very probably say that he did not go beyond grade school, but he had a kind of native intelligence, wit and understanding. More than likely, he had never been further than a hundred and fifty miles from home.

Now, into this normal pattern of life came a man called Jesus. If we wanted to let our imagination run loose to this whole subject, we would try to picture in various images what it was like when the torrential life of Jesus moved into the bay of Peter's quiet shallows. Jesus was about the same age; we do not know exactly when Peter was born, but apparently he was a contemporary of Jesus. Jesus was raised not far away in a town called Nazareth. He, too, was a working man; he had been trained as an apprentice to his father, who was a carpenter. He was brought up in the same religious atmosphere as Peter; he was fed with the same spiritual food, he went to the same sort of synagogue, he read the same scriptures, he had the same hopes and longings for the future of his people.

Here the similarity stops, for there was something amazingly different about Jesus. When we try to say in words what it was, we realize all over again what we have realized thousands of times before that words fail us, but perhaps these come somewhere near telling us what we want to say about Jesus. Jesus believed that he was sent to bring the Kingdom of God to men, and to bring men into the Kingdom of God. That was his supreme mission in life. One day

he flashed across the life of Simon Peter like a comet from another world and asked him to help him with his life's work. Peter dropped everything and followed him.

Why? Why would a young man who had inherited a good business drop it on a moment's notice to follow somebody who had not yet done anything to establish his reputation, and who had no credentials, and no prospects, no promises for the future? Why would he do it? No one knows, and I suppose no one will ever know; all we can do is to imagine and ponder. There was something in Jesus that spoke to the depths of Peter. Even plain and inarticulate men have depths, though they may be seldom reached. And Peter saw something in Jesus that demanded everything from him. He has never left any description of what he saw or felt, but perhaps something that John recorded later on might give us a clue. A year or so later when people were beginning to drift away from Jesus and his followers were getting fewer and fewer, he looked at Peter and said, "Will you also go away?" And Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." In other words, Peter recognized in Jesus Life, the secret of Life, the key that unlocks the door, the fulfillment of all that men hope and dream for. This he recognized in him with that clear and direct perception that sometimes an uneducated, unsophisticated man has and an academically trained man does not have. Whatever it was about Jesus that attracted him, it was the end of the fishing business as far as Peter was concerned.

WAR OF AN ORDINARY MAN

Notice now two things. There was no radical break with the past, at least not so far as we know. Peter was not torn asunder, so to speak, either religiously or morally. He was brought up a loyal member of the Jewish synagogue, he was a good Jew and he continued to be one. Later on he grew out of the chrysalis of narrow, legalistic Judaism, but there was no immediate break at this particular moment. Morally, there was no break. There is no indication that Peter had led a sordid life of sin and that suddenly he changed his ways and led the life of a saint.

All this goes to remind us that a "religious experience" does not always have to be a catastrophic conversion to be real. This is not meant to imply that there are not real conversions that are catastrophic and are desperately real, but it does imply that we are not all made like Saint Francis, or Augustine, or Paul, and that religion, to b real, does not necessarily need to be catastro phic. Sometimes it is more like the growt of a tree than a sudden flash of lightning.

Another thing to notice is this; it is corollary of the first. There was no desper ate crisis in Peter's personal life at the tim that his meeting with Jesus occurred. He di not have a personal problem like his grea contemporary Paul. He was not unemploy ed; he had a good job and economic security He was not an alcoholic or a neurotic; h was not having trouble with his wife or hi wife's mother, as far as we know. He wa living a perfectly happy domestic home life He was not on the brink of suicide; he wa not fed-up with life, nor was he living unde any abnormal pressure. He was just an or dinary man who met the most extraordinar Man that ever lived. And when he met him he knew it and his life was different fron that moment on. It was the beginning of life-long loyalty.

DRAWN INTO EXPERIENCE

There are two points at which people ar drawn into the Christian experience. Th first is the "point of no return," the poin that a man reaches when he has gone too fa to go back and knows that he hasn't th strength to go forward. The only apparen possibility is to go down. It is the point o desperation. Sometimes, something, or mor likely someone, reaches a man at that poin and rescues him, and lifts him up into life There was no reason for him to expect any thing but defeat, but help came—out of th blue, down from heaven, from wherever yo may say, and the moment of rescue become a revelation to him of something that h never knew before.

Can you imagine what must have hap pened when the ship that we all read abou during the last war went down, when fou of the men lost their life-belts and four chap lains gave them theirs and saved their lives They were at the point of no return. I d not know what happened to the men indiv dually (I know that the four chaplains wer drowned), but surely it would be strang if the act of sacrifice on the part of fou men which saved their lives was not a revela tion to them of a love and loyalty far beyon anything they had ever dreamed of befor And that is one point at which men and w men are drawn into the Christian exper ence; when they are saved, literally lifted u out of doom and destruction, and given new life they neither expected nor deserve

The other point is what I call the point

dden exposure. Things are going fairly ll, there is no crisis at the moment, and re are no particular needs over and above needs that we all have all the time. Sud-nly, along the normal course of events, a n is exposed to something or someone that otivates him. A young Harvey Cushing ets a Sir William Osler and the future the medical world is changed. An Agnes Mille sees Pavlova dance, a John Keats ds Chapman's *Homer*, a young boy hears ahms for the first time, a fisherman nam-Peter sees Jesus, and the life of the West-n world takes a different turn. One of you that same figure in all his alluring and jestic proportions and dimensions, and t revelation becomes, ultimately, your vation.

The first, of course, is the way of people e Paul, the people whom William James led "the twice-born men." It is the way t the revivalists talk about. It is the way which some of you may have been drawn o the Christian experience. The second is way of people like Peter. It reaches down a man's loyalties; it stirs something in n. It is a revelation that changes the rse of his life. All of a sudden, or gradu-y perhaps, a man sees Jesus and rec-nizes him to be the Way, and the Truth, d the Life. There is no doubt or question his mind. This is one of the ways that ne people are drawn into the Christian perience.

NTERPRETATION OF EXPERIENCE

Because Peter's experience is something e ours, we want to know how it worked . There is no evidence that Peter changed r night, that he became a completely dif-ent person, not like Francis of Assisi o changed suddenly from a playboy to a ubadour of God. From everything that we n gather from the Gospels, Peter was y much the same sort of person after he t Jesus that he was before. He said the ong thing at the wrong time before he t Jesus and he continued to do it after he t him. We remember one of those crucial ments in the New Testament when Jesus ed his intimate friends what people were ing about him, and they gave different swers. Then Peter, again with the direct-s of the plain man, said, "Thou are the rist." Jesus went on to tell him that he s going to have to suffer, and that he ne into the world to share the pain of man beings. At that point Peter, who d shown such extraordinary insight into nature of Jesus just a moment before, began to rebuke him! It was the wrong thing to say at the wrong time.

Also Peter had no great spiritual depths, not the kind of spiritual reserves that we found in Jeremiah, either before he met Jesus or after. One time Peter threw himself down at the feet of Jesus and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Do you remember what it was that made him say that? We might think that it was some soul-stirring experience that plumbed the depths of his life. Not at all; it was an unusually good catch of fish! What took him to his knees was the simple experience that life went better with Jesus than it did without him. That is not the sign of any great spiritual depth, but it is as real as daylight. It is where most people begin in religion; they start with an experience which almost miraculously amplifies their life. And that was the level that Peter moved on, always.

He was impulsive before he met Jesus and he was still impulsive afterwards. One of the stories about Peter that I like is the story of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee at night in a storm. Jesus approached them walking on the water, and he called Peter to come to him, and to everybody's amazement Peter bailed out of the boat, so to speak, and began walking on the water, impulsive, impetuous, great-hearted, daring. "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid," and he began to sink, not able to carry through the great thing that he had begun.

SECRET OF POWER

If this is a true reading of Peter's character, we might then ask, what is the secret of Peter's power? Why did Jesus count on him so much? And he centainly did. Peter was one of the three—Peter, James and John—that Jesus took with him into the most private and intimate experiences of his own life. Why did Jesus, apparently, found his whole movement on the likes of Peter? What was it about Peter? Again, it is almost impossible, and I suppose a daring thing to try to put into words, but I hope this will suggest to you things that are beyond the reach of words. The secret of Peter's power was that he never lost his original loyalty. He went down over and over again, but he always came up. "He followed afar off," to be sure, at a tragic distance from his master, but he followed. And that was more than the others did. He denied Jesus in one of the blackest moments in his own personal life and certainly one of the dark episodes in the history of human relationships, but

he went out and wept bitterly under the penetrating look of Jesus, and he was the first to reach the empty tomb. He failed over and over again, but he didn't worry about it; he wasn't upset; he picked himself up and went on to carry out that first ultimate loyalty that he recognized in Jesus, the word of Eternal Life. Under extreme pressure, he denied Jesus but he never really doubted him. And no matter what he did, Jesus never deserted him.

There is a wonderful story about him in the Acts of the Apostles. After he had been in prison, you remember, and was miraculously led out by an angel through the gate that opened of its own accord, he went back to the house where he had been staying and knocked on the door. When Rhoda went to the door and realized who it was, she was so excited that instead of opening the door and letting him in, she went back to tell them who it was, and left him standing there. And the story goes on, "But Peter kept on knocking." It is a great trait for plain folk like you and me to keep on even though we have made mistakes and even though we have denied and betrayed, and followed far off, to keep on following nevertheless because underneath it all we know that this is the way of life, and that there isn't any other.

It isn't any wonder that he appeals to human beings like you and me so much. William Temple, the great Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote one time something that is characteristic of him. "The example of Paul," he wrote, "is of little use to me; I am not a hero. The example of John is of but little use; my love is so feeble. But Peter is a source of constant encouragement, for his weakness is so manifest, yet because he was truly the friend of his Lord, he became the Prince of the Apostles."

And the extraordinary thing, and now you can see we are coming to Peter's crowning glory, the extraordinary thing about Peter was that in spite of all his weakness, and even though he did fail and make many blunders and mistakes, nevertheless, more and more he radiated the spirit of his Master, so that the people who had sick folk in their family tried to bring them into the shadow that Peter cast because that shadow was to them the shadow of Christ himself.

LIKENESS OF CHRIST

Peter, in one sense, was never converted, yet he grew more and more in the likeness of his Master. There is a wonderful line in the Acts again that tells volumes about Peter. When things were hard for the Christians and they were under strong opposition and attack, the story says that "In those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples." If I could take any one line to write under the life history of Peter, I think it might be that one, leaving out the last phrase. "And Peter stood up." He fell down many times, to be sure, but that underlying, basic loyalty to the Lord he loved never faltered, and in the long run he stood up and rose above them all.

There is a legend that once again tells more about Peter than almost anything else we could find. According to the story, he was living in Rome during the last years of his life. When the Neronian persecution began to threaten the lives of Christians, he had the impulse to leave Rome and save his own skin. The same old Peter! He started to leave the city, walking alone along the Appian Way. Before he had gone very far he met Jesus coming toward him, and he said, "Whither goest thou, Lord?" And Jesus said, "I am going back to Rome to be crucified again." Peter said nothing, but he turned around with his head up, and went back to Rome, and was crucified with his head down.

That is loyalty, and something infinitely more than loyalty. It is not beyond any one of us and it carries plain people like you and me through many dark places and sometimes lifts us to incredible heights.